1609/3530.

A SHORT ESSAY

ON THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION, &c.

1795

ERRATA.

Page 15. line 16, *read* came you—p. 24, l. 5, *read* Maxentius—p. 32, l. 23, *dele* of—p. 56, l laſt, *read* tightened—p 60, l. 6, *read* the—p 70, l 12, note, *read* Rabelais—p. 82, l. 8, *read* vetante—p. 100, l. 21, *add* of—p. 114, l. 2 from bottom, *read* Voluſian—p. 117, l. 14, *read* diſont—p. 119, l. 16, *read* Secularis—p. 125, l. 16, *read* ſuperior—p. 127, l. 8, *read* deportment—p. 132, l. 7, *read* proſelytes—p. ibid. l. 17, *read* quand—p. ibid. l. 19, *read* veritè.

A

SHORT ESSAY

ON THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE

ADVANTAGES WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO SOCIETY BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF IT, AS CONTRASTED WITH THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF MANKIND BEFORE THAT HAPPY PERIOD.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

A FEW OCCASIONAL REMARKS ON PHILOSOPHERS IN GENERAL, AS ALSO ON SOME OF THE OBJECTIONS STARTED AGAINST THE CHKISTIAN RELIGION BY THE FASHIONABLE WRITERS OF THE PRESENT AGE.

THE WHOLE PROPOSED

AS A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST THE PERNICIOUS DOCTRINES WHICH HAVE OVERWHELMED FRANCE WITH MISERY AND DESOLATION.

" Avoid all thoſe," ſays J. J. Rouſſeau, " who under pretence " of explaining nature, ſow in the hearts of men diſconſolate doc- " trines, and whoſe apparent ſcepticiſm is a hundred times more " dictatorialand dogmatical, than the deciſive tone of their adver- " ſaries."——(Emile, t. iii. p. 101.)

BY A SINCERE FRIEND OF MANKIND.

LONDON:

Printed by J. P. COGHLAN, No. 37, Duke-Street, Groſvenor-Square; and Sold by Meſſrs. BOOKER, Bond-Street; KEATING, Warwick-Street; LEWIS, Ruſſel-Street; DEBRETT, Piccadilly; and ROBINSONS, Pater-Noſter Row.

M,DCC,XCV.

72
FEB

TO MY SON.

ACCEPT, my Deareſt Friend, the following little Eſſay, as a ſmall tribute of my love and affection. When the ſtate is in danger, you know, that every citizen ſhould take up arms; and when the peace and welfare of ſociety is likely to be diſturbed, every man, as far as his abilities will permit, ſhould ſtep forward to counteract the evil. It

was

was with this view that I took up my pen; and tho' conſcious of the mediocrity of my talents for the purpoſe, I could not reſiſt giving you my thoughts upon a ſubject of ſuch magnitude and importance.

You are ſenſible that I have not the preſumption to ſet myſelf up for an author. Thus I hope to apologize for every inaccuracy you may meet with; and to avoid any unmerited praiſe from the partiality of my friends, I have refrained to affix

affix my name. If the contents however prove beneficial to you and your family, I ſhall obtain a ſingular ſatisfaction, for the welfare and happineſs of both lie neareſt the heart of, my Deareſt Friend,

YOUR EVER AFFECTIONATE FATHER,

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

London, March 25, 1795.

72
FEB

A SHORT ESSAY

ON THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION, &c.

IT might be a matter of aſtoniſhment that philoſophers, who ſet themſelves up for the reformers of mankind, ſhould ſo bitterly inveigh againſt the chriſtian religion, were we not certain that two very powerful motives frequently act upon the hearts and minds of men. Theſe are vanity, and the impatience of controul; for as Lucretius ſays,

" 'Tis ſweet to crop freſh flow'rs, & get a crown
" For new and rare inventions of our own."

(Creech's Tranſlat.)

" Vanity" ſays a very ingenious writer, " ani-
" mates the hero to extend his conqueſts at
" the expence of juſtice, and ſtimulates the
" philoſopher to erect the banners of error on

" the ruins of truth." Experience indeed, as well as the conceſſions of philoſophers themſelves, both ancient and modern, prove that the world has neither been more enlightened, or become better for their inſtructions. In the philoſophic works of Cicero we find that the philoſophers had no ſettled or uniform ideas, but were perpetually contradicting and combating each others opinions. Plutarch on the ſentiments of nature, which the philoſophers held, remarks the ſame diſcordant principles. But no author has ſo truly deſcribed, or rather ridiculed their opinions as Lucian in his dialogue between Menippus and Philonides. Menippus tells him that with the view of diſcovering the truth, if poſſible, he undertook to read Homer and Heſiod. But he was ſoon diſguſted with them on account of the follies they attributed to their gods; deſcribing them as monſters of debauchery, and adepts in every ſpecies of wickedneſs. " I thought it then prudent," ſays he, " to apply to the philoſophers. But " I found that I fell from one evil into a " greater, for I diſcovered ſo much ignorance, " and ſuch uncertainty concerning matters of " the greateſt importance that the moſt illite- " rate people ſeemed to me incomparably " wiſe

" wiſer than they were. For one of them " told me that all happineſs conſiſted in the " free uſe of our paſſions: others affirmed " that we ſhould not give way to our pleaſures, " but labour and ſuffer courageouſly. One " party ſaid that I was to hold gold and ſilver " in contempt; another maintained that the " poſſeſſion of them was real happineſs. When " they came to deſcant upon the formation " of the world, they talked of atoms, empty " ſpace, of bodies without ſubſtance and many " other unintelligible matters. But that " which diſguſted me the moſt was to find " them all ſo dogmatical in their opinions; " thus what one affirmed to be cold, the other " maintained to be hot. Wherefore I knew " not what to think, or what to ſay. However " the height of extravagance, as it appeared " to me, was the pointed contradiction I per- " ceived between their doctrines and their " practice. One party, who were all uſurers, " declaimed againſt riches; another repro- " bated fame and glory, yet were perpetually " in queſt of both. They were in general " violent in their invectives againſt ſuch per- " ſons as gave themſelves up to illicit pleaſures, " and yet in private they were themſelves the " moſt debauched."

Hermias, nearly at the ſame period of time, though not ſo ſevere a ſatiriſt as Lucian, does not ſpeak more favorably of the philoſophers. "I inquired", ſays he, "what they ſuppoſed "the nature of the ſoul to be. Democritus "aſſured me that it was fire; the Stoics "maintained that it was air; Heraclitus de- "clared it to be motion; Pythagoras called it "a ſhade; Hippo inſiſted that it was ſeminal "water; Democrates affirmed it to be har- "mony; Critias contended that it was blood; "others a vapour which comes from the ſtars, "&c. &c. Each of them had his peculiar "jargon, but not one of them ſeemed to know "the truth My next inquiry was to know "what becomes of the ſoul. Some of the "philoſophers ſuppoſed it to be immortal, "others periſhable. Some affirmed that it "ſurvives the body for a while; others that "it is immediately reduced to atoms. Many "contended that it inhabits the bodies of "beaſts; and others that it ſurvives the hu- "man body for three thouſand years. Some- "times therefore I am immortal, and conſe- "quently feel myſelf happy; then I am mor- "tal, which afflicts me. Sometimes I am air, "water, fire, and at laſt nothing of all theſe, "but I become a fiſh, a reptile, a wild beaſt,

"or

" or ſome other quadruped; and when I meet " a man, I know not whether to call him an " ox, a dog, or what not. Finally Empedo- " cles, improving upon all theſe fine ſyſtems, " turns me into a tree, or into a buſh. Such " only is the information I have been able to " acquire from the philoſophers." *(Irriſio Philoſoph.*

It may be aſked if we can get better information from the philoſophers of the preſent day. Let J. J. Rouſſeau, that eccentric genius, anſwer the queſtion. " Under the " haughty pretext," ſays he, " of being the " only perſons who are truly enlightened, " honeſt and ſincere, they ſubject us to their " magiſterial deciſions, and give us for the " true principles of things only unintelligible " ſyſtems which they have raiſed in their own " imaginations. Add to this, that while they " overturn, deſtroy and trample under foot " every thing that is reſpectable among man- " kind, they deprive the afflicted of the laſt " conſolation in their miſery; take from the " rich and powerful the only check to the in- " dulgence of their paſſions; they eradicate " from our hearts the remorſe of guilt and the " hopes of virtue; abſurdly boaſting them- " ſelves at the ſame time the friends and bene-

" factors

" factors of mankind. The truth, they ſay, can " never be hurtful. So far I am of their opi- " nion; and this is to me a great proof that " what they teach cannot be true." (*Emile*, *t.* iii. *p.* 149.)

The impatience of controul, as has been obſerved, acts alſo very forcibly on the hearts and minds of men. The obſcurity of the myſteries, which the chriſtian religion propoſes to our belief, is only a pretext for their incredulity. It may therefore be preſumed that they would believe without difficulty, and even without reflection, if a bare aſſent was ſufficient to attain the end propoſed. But " why were myſteries requiſite?" exclaims John Jacques Rouſſeau. He has anſwered the queſtion himſelf. The divine nature is eſſentially incomprehenſible, becauſe it is infinite; whence, he affirms that " our underſtanding " being limited, hath no conception of any " thing without bounds. Whatever is called " infinite confounds us." (*Emile*, *t.* iii. *p.* 80.)

But have theſe advocates for the reformation of mankind duly conſidered the ſtate of the world before it was bleſſed by the chriſtian diſpenſation; what it is likely to be again, (for the ſame cauſes have the ſame effects) and what it has been ſince the eſtabliſhment of

of it? What it will degenerate into, we evidently ſee by the diſtracted ſtate of France. There indeed they have exceeded the pagans themſelves in abſurdity and wickedneſs. The heathens puniſhed atheiſm with baniſhment and death. They not only deemed thoſe to be atheiſts, who in general denied the exiſtence of the Gods, but all ſuch as did not acknowledge the local deities of the places they inhabited. They accounted them peſts to ſociety, and treated them accordingly. The hiſtories of Greece and of Rome afford ample information on the ſubject. They did not therefore bury virtue and vice in the ſame grave by denominating death an *eternal ſleep*. Abſtracting from their religious creed, they were too wiſe and politic to admit ſuch dangerous doctrines; dangerous in fact, for no man's life or property would in that caſe be ſecure. Both would be at the mercy of every villain, whom nothing might deter but the laſh of the law, which he might hope to evade. Death, in the opinion of the heathens, was not an *eternal* ſleep, but like unto ſleep, which conveys a very different idea. This is elegantly expreſſed by Virgil in his deſcription of hell, which plainly proves that a future ſtate was generally admitted in his days.

"At

" At hell's dread mouth a thouſand monſters wait,
" Grief weeps, and vengeance bellows at the gate:
" Baſe want, low fear, and famine's lawleſs rage,
" And pale diſeaſe, and ſlow repining age.
" Fierce formidable fiends! the portal keep,
" With pain, toil, death, and death's *half-brother* ſleep.
(Pitt's Tranſlat.

When M. de Beaurepaire, the governor of Verdun in 1792, was obliged by the garriſon to ſurrender the town to the enemy, he took a piſtol, and ſhot himſelf. This action appeared ſo meritorious in the eyes of the national aſſembly that they ordered his remains to be depoſited in the Pantheon at Paris. " Let us," ſaid they, " honor " the death of Beaurepaire with our grief; "and ſet aſide, in favor of juſtice and " gratitude, that barbarous prejudice which " hitherto has ſtigmatiſed the ſelf-devote- " ment of Cato * and Brutus as acts of fury " and

* It was pride in the moſt ſuperlative degree, which made him commit that raſh action;

" Hence blind to truth, relentleſs Cato died,
" Nought could ſubdue his virtue but his pride."
(Eſſay on Satire.)

Did he however intend to act conſcientiouſly, and to do the thing he ſuppoſed right? If ſo, why did he not exhort his ſon and his friends to follow his example? on the contrary,

"and madneſs." "Death," they added, "is a reſource of which oppreſſed virtue "ought not to be deprived*." The heathens however in general thought otherwiſe.

"The next in place," ſays Virgil, "and puniſhment
"are they
"Who prodigally threw their lives away."

(Dryden's Tranſlat.)

Though theſe ideas concerning a future ſtate, ſo congenial to every perſon of the leaſt reflection, were generally adopted by the ancient world till they became infected by the Epicurean doctrines, which introduced atheiſm, and was finally the cauſe of the deſtruction of that † republic, yet there were ſuch

trary, he adviſed them to accept the clemency of Cæſar, which was equally offered to himſelf. Brutus at one time diſapproved of Cato's principles reſpecting ſuicide, yet was guilty of it himſelf. Why? becauſe he had no alternative but to die by his own hands, or grace the triumph of Auguſtus, which muſt end in the moſt cruel and ignominious death. But Beaurepaire had nothing of all this to fear. His life and humane treatment were ſecured by the law of nations; a beneficent law, for which we are indebted to chriſtianity.

* See the journals printed by their orders.

† "At this period the Roman ſenate," ſays M. de Voltaire. *(Dict. Phil. art. Atheiſt)* "were truly an aſſem-

ſuch variations and ſuch uncertainty in their opinions on this and other ſubjects of the kind, that the wiſeſt of their philoſophers candidly confeſſed the inutility of all their reſearches to find out the truth, and the need they ſtood in of a divine revelation for that purpoſe. Plato, the greateſt genius Greece ever produced, deſpaired of ever knowing the origin and deſtination of man, "unleſs" ſays he, "a "more certain way be given us, as ſome pro-"miſe, or a divine revelation, that relying "on it, as on a veſſel that runs no riſk, we "may happily finiſh the voyage of our life." The ſame philoſopher, in his ſecond dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades, aſſerts that "we muſt wait patiently till ſome one appears "who may be capable of inſtructing us in the "manner we ought to behave towards the "gods and towards men."—"It would be "better," he adds, "to with-hold our ſacri-"fices, than not to know, if by offering them, "we ſhall pleaſe or diſpleaſe the Deity." In his *Phedo*, or treatiſe on the ſoul, and in his

"bly of atheiſts. The conquerors and legiſlators of the "world were viſibly a ſociety of atheiſts. They finally "ruined the republic." May not the ſame remark be made on the French legiſlators of the preſent day?

Epinomis

Epinomis he acknowledges the ſame neceſſity of a ſuperior guide. Cicero, in his Tuſculan Queſtions, laments the weakneſs of the light of nature, and the almoſt inevitable danger of being led aſtray by vulgar errors, and by the general corruption of things.

After the humble confeſſion of ſuch philoſophers we ſhall not be ſurpriſed that the heathens fell into ſuch monſtrous extravagances and abſurdities, both religious and moral; ſuch as would hardly be credited, if they were not tranſmitted to us by themſelves. Though painful to relate, they afford a moſt uſeful leſſon. They remind us of that gratitude with which every breaſt ought to be impreſſed towards a religion which has enlightened the minds of mankind, and withdrawn them from the folly of their former practices.

Many acts which are repugnant to moral virtue and innate decency we find to have been authorized by their laws, inculcated by their philoſophers, and made ſacred by their religion, even amongſt the Greeks and Romans, the politeſt people of the ancient world. The inhumanity with which they treated their ſlaves; the barbarous and un-natural combats of their gladiators, the extortions of the uſurers, the continual ſubverſion of their ſtates,

the frequent aſſaſſinations of their princes, and finally the ſhocking extravagance of idolatry will likewiſe ſurpriſe and aſtoniſh us. Each article ſhall be treated ſeparately, and in as conciſe a manner as poſſible; and it will be ſhown, at the concluſion of each, that the abolition of theſe horrid and inhuman cuſtoms was the fruit of the goſpel.

Article I.

Who would believe that ſuch renowned philoſophers as the divine Plato and the wiſe Plutarch ſhould be the abettors of thoſe infamous * crimes which not only diſgrace human nature, but are an outrage to it. It is impoſſible to read the dialogues of Pauſanias and Alcibiades in the feaſt of Plato without horror and diſguſt. Notwithſtanding his addreſs, we eaſily perceive that this divine Plato is conſcious of the infamous leſſons which he inculcates. As for Plutarch, in the very work wherein he preſcribes rules for the edu-

* A firſt-rate philoſopher, Mr: de Voltaire, calls theſe horrid exceſſes *inſipid trifles*, (fadaiſes in French). Such is the light tone the author aſſumes in his philoſophical works by way of reforming mankind!

cation

cation of youth, he heſitates if he ſhall recommend thoſe very crimes or not; and, after weighing the matter, decides in the affirmative. Indeed, he ſays, that "he is tender of "being the perſuader and encourager of ſuch "practices, but is determined in his opinion "by Socrates and Plato, by Xenophon, Æſ-"chines and Cebes, with a whole groupe of "ſuch other men*." Seneca informs us of the prodigious number of victims which were ſacrificed to this deteſtable paſſion; and he declaims againſt it with the greateſt force and energy†. In Lampridius we read that the Emperor Alexander Severus did not dare attempt to remedy this evil on account of the numbers who gave into it‡.

How ſhall we deſcribe the injury done to decency by the public proſtitutions, which were reckoned the moſt ſolemn duties of their religion? In Babylon, the women dreſſed in their beſt attire, offered themſelves to every

* See Plutarch's morals tranſlated by Dr. Simon Ford, vol. 1. p. 30.

† Epiſt. 95. p 601.

‡ The reader will be pleaſed to obſerve that the paſſages extracted from the Roman hiſtorians are taken from the folio edition preſented by King George I. to the univerſity of Cambridge.

ſtranger

ſtranger they met. The money ariſing from this infamous traffic was deſtined to maintain the temples of Venus*. In Armenia, ſlaves of both ſexes were ſacrificed to this obſcene goddeſs, and young ladies of quality were not permitted to marry till they had devoted themſelves to proſtitution for a certain time†. The ſame cuſtom prevailed in Lydia, as Herodotus reports. In deſcribing the ſepulchre of Allyattus, the father of Creſus, he ſays that the daughters of the Lydians are accuſtomed to acquire their dowries by proſtitution, and then they are permitted to marry as they pleaſe‡. In Phenicia, the women had their choice either of ſubmitting to certain ſuperſtitious ceremonies in honor of Adonis, or of admitting for a whole day every ſtranger who choſe to approach them. The profits ariſing from this religious traffic were alſo conſecrated to Venus§. Strabo informs us likewiſe that there was an incredible number of women in Corinth dedicated to this obſcene goddeſs‖.

* Strabonis Geographia, lib. xvi. p. 745.
† Ibid. lib. xii. p. 532.
‡ Vol. i. p. 61.
§ Lucian de Dea Syria, p. 1058.
‖ Lib. viii. p. 378.

The

The indecencies exhibited in the Floral games are largely deſcribed by Valerius Maximus. He tells us that Cato being preſent at thoſe which Meſſius the Ædile exhibited, the people were aſhamed to order the actors to ſtrip themſelves naked. Cato, perceiving this, withdrew; leſt his preſence ſhould prevent the uſual entertainment from taking place*. But would not this wiſe Roman have done better, either to have abſented himſelf from thoſe games, or to have ſtaid there, as his preſence was a reſtraint upon the licentiouſneſs of the people? This is much what Martial thought. "Why, ſays he, putting the queſtion to Cato, " did you appear at " thoſe games? Come you into the theatre " only to go away again?

" Cur in theatrum, Cato ſevere, veniſti?
" An ideo tantum veneras, ut exires?"

Theocritus ſings the praiſes of thoſe who excelled in lewdneſs†.

Anacreon and Horace paint in glowing colours the exceſſes of the Greeks and Romans in this reſpect. Even Cato, the wiſe, the ſevere Cato, carried on a ſcandalous traffic

* Lib. 2. p. 202.
† Idil. 12. p. 162, &c.

with

with his beautiful ſlaves. At Sparta, on certain days of the year, it was uſual for both ſexes to exerciſe and dance naked together. "The laws of that republic," ſays Monteſquieu, "not only deprived parents of all natu-"ral feelings, but alſo ſtripped chaſtity of "modeſty." Their laws alſo permitted the promiſcuous uſe of women, whether married, or unmarried. It was alſo practiſed in other Grecian ſtates. There are even examples of it in Rome. Yet to ſhew how unjuſt and inconſiſtent ſome of the Roman laws were, we need only mention that againſt adultery. If a wife was taken in adultery, the huſband might kill her without any form of law, whilſt the law gave no power to the wife to obtain ſatisfaction for her huſband's irregularities. Plutarch thought this law, as well as that which authoriſes the huſband to kill his wife, if ſhe drank wine, to be very cruel; nevertheleſs they were conformable to the laws of Romulus. The original words are. "In adulte-"rio uxorem tuam ſi deprehendiſſes, *impunè* "necares: ſi illa te adultereres, digito con-"tingere non auderet."

But why dwell longer on ſuch infamous ſcenes, when, from the few ſpecimens adduced, we may form ſo compleat a judgment of the

the manners and cuſtoms of mankind before they were bleſſed with the knowledge of the chriſtian diſpenſation? No ſooner did it prevail, than we ſee Conſtantine, the firſt of the Chriſtian emperors, iſſuing a ſevere law (cum vir in fœminam nubit) againſt thoſe horrid and infamous practices. The myſterious rites of paganiſm being proſcribed, public decency began to be reſpected. Firſt proof of the advantages which have accrued to ſociety by the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity.

As Conſtantine, ſo juſtly ſtiled *the great*, notwithſtanding the cavils of modern philoſophy, had by his authority in a great meaſure ſuppreſſed the flagrant diſorders and abuſes to which paganiſm gave birth, and as he openly profeſſed himſelf the protector of the chriſtians, it will not be ſurpriſing that he ſhould be ſeverely cenſured by M. de Voltaire; whoſe uniform plan ſeems to have been not only to depreciate the chriſtian religion itſelf, but likewiſe all thoſe who were zealous in ſupporting it. It may not therefore be unacceptable to the reader if a ſhort ſketch be given of that Emperor's life and actions in the firſt place, and ſecondly a detail of thoſe defects in his character and conduct, which the French philoſopher has imputed to him.

Flavius Valerius Conſtantine was the ſon of Conſtantius Chlorus and Helena. He was born in the year 274, and attended his father on his death-bed at York. As ſoon as that event took place, he was ſaluted Emperor by the Roman troops who were with him, anno 306. Maximian Galerus, one of his father's aſſociates in the empire, would agree only to his taking the title of Ceſar, to which he acquieſced. This however did not prevent him from being the ſovereign of all the Gauls, Great Britain and Spain. He took the title of Auguſtus in the year 308 by the conſent and approbation of the two other Emperors, his colleagues, after having gained ſeveral victories over the Franks and the Germans. It is reported of him that he had taken an early predilection for the chriſtian religion, and that he was finally encouraged to adopt it by the miraculous appearance of a croſs in the clouds with the following inſcription, *In this ſign you ſhall conquer*. Be that as it may, he defeated Maxentius, againſt whom he was then marching. By this victory, Conſtantine became maſter of all Italy and Africa. He immediately cauſed a ſtandard to be made with the repreſentation of a croſs, under which were affixed the aboveſaid words. This ſtandard

dard he ordered to be carried at the head of his army. He afterwards defeated Licinius, and cauſed him to be put to death. By the death alſo of Licinian, he became ſole maſter of the empire. He forbid any further perſecution of the chriſtians, and ſubmitted to be ranged himſelf among the catechumens to be inſtructed in the tenets of the goſpel. He conſtructed both in Rome and in other parts of the empire ſeveral magnificent churches and other public edifices, which he endowed in a manner worthy of himſelf. Having built the city of Byſantium, he ordered it to be called Conſtantinople. His zeal for the preſervation of the chriſtian faith in all its purity was as great, as were his attentions to govern the empire with equity and juſtice. He made the greateſt efforts to extinguiſh the hereſy of the Donatiſts at the council of Arles. Soon after he publiſhed an ordinance for the ſtrict obſervance of the Sunday, commanding every perſon to abſtain from ſervile work on that day. He aſſiſted at the firſt general council at Nicea, wherein Arius was condemned. The expences of the prelates who attended at the council, were defrayed by him, and he kiſſed the wounds of thoſe who had ſuffered for their faith during the perſecutions of Li-

cinius. Conſtantine however has been cenſured for his partiality to his ſiſter Conſtantia who was a favorer of the Arians, alſo for having confided to miniſters who betrayed the intereſts of his people, and for not puniſhing them when convicted of peculation. He is likewiſe cenſured for putting his ſon Criſpus to death. It may be ſuppoſed that the pagan hiſtorians would not overlook entirely the defects and blemiſhes in the character of a man, who had ſhown ſuch a viſible partiality for the chriſtian religion, and conſequently a diſlike for that of the empire. Yet in other reſpects, they ſpeak highly of his great qualities, particularly of his courage and knowledge in the military art. He died at Achyron near Nicomedia on the 22d of March, 337, at 63 years of age. Such are the outlines which contemporary hiſtorians give of him. Let us now attend to his character, as it is tranſmitted to us by the pen of M. de Voltaire.

"Conſtantius Chlorus," ſays he, (*Melonges, chap.* lxi.) "was in a remote part of England, "where for ſome months he had aſſumed the "title of Emperor. Conſtantine was at that "time at Nicomedia with the Emperor Ga-"lerus. He requeſted permiſſion to go to

ſee

" his father. Galerus made not the leaſt dif-
" ficulty. Finding his father at the point of
" death, he got himſelf acknowledged Empe-
" ror by the troops, who were then in Eng-
" land. The election of a Roman Emperor
" made at York by five or ſix thouſand ſol-
" diers could not poſſibly be thought lawful
" at Rome. The ſanction of the *Senatus popu-*
" *luſque Romanus* was at leaſt wanting. The
" Senate however, the people, and the Preto-
" rian guards choſe Maxentius, the brother of
" that Fauſta, whom Conſtantine had mar-
" ried. Our hiſtorians, who always ſide with
" the fortunate, call Maxentius a tyrant, and
" an uſurper. Being a pagan, of courſe, they
" repreſent him in the blackeſt colours."
So far M. de Voltaire.

Conſtantius Chlorus, ſays he, *was in a remote part of England, where for ſome months he had aſſumed the title of Emperor.* It ſeems as if M. de Voltaire by this period wiſhed to inſinuate that this Emperor had aſſumed the title, nobody knows how, in a remote part of England. When he attempts to diminiſh the number of martyrs, he pretends that there were none for a conſiderable time either in Spain, the Gauls, in England, or in a part of Germany, all of which were under the domi-

nion

nion of Conſtantius Chlorus, the avowed protector of the chriſtians. Here he makes him a very potent and puiſſant prince. But when he repreſents him as the father of Conſtantine the great, he ſpeaks of him in a contemptuous manner, as if he was baniſhed in a remote and ſequeſtered part of England. Notwithſtanding this bold aſſertion, the Roman hiſtorians aſſure us that he was created Ceſar above thirteen years before his death, and Emperor and Auguſtus above a year and a half before that period. "Conſtantine" ſays the French poet, "requeſted permiſſion to go and "ſee his father. Galerus made not the leaſt "difficulty." It appears however by the teſtimony of Aurelius Victor * that he wiſhed to detain him, which obliged Conſtantine to eſcape privately. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire adopts M. de Voltaire's opinion, and ſays (page 404, note 10) that "Zorimus † tells a very fooliſh ſtory

* Sextus Aurelius Victor. He ſerved under the Emperor Julian, and from a very low condition, raiſed himſelf by his merits to the firſt employments in the ſtate.

† A Greek hiſtorian. He was a pagan, and lived about the year 410. Only five or ſix books of his hiſtory of the Emperors are extant. He never loſes any opportunity of declaiming againſt the chriſtians, and was in particular the profeſſed enemy of Conſtantine.

of

" of Conſtantine cauſing all the poſt-horſes " which he had uſed to be hamſtrung. Such " a bloody execution, without preventing a " purſuit, would undoubtedly have occaſioned " ſuſpicions that might have ſtopped his jour- " ney*." Fooliſh as the ſtory may appear to him, he might have remarked that Aurelius Victor mentions the fact alſo. (vol. i. p. 633. " Conſtantine procured himſelf to be acknow- " ledged Emperor by the troops who were in " England. The election of a Roman Empe- " ror made at York by five or ſix thouſand " ſoldiers could not poſſibly be thought law- " ful at Rome." The Roman hiſtorians ſay that he was ſaluted Emperor by the troops on the very day of his father's death. Nevertheleſs he would not accept the title till he had got the conſent of Galerus, of whom he demanded it. Galerus refuſed his requeſt, and would only permit him to take the title of Ceſar, to which Conſtantine acquieſced. Such an inſtance of moderation and greatneſs of ſoul, which made him prefer an inferior title, rather than cauſe a civil war, was till then unprecedented. This laudable example however had no effect fifty years afterwards over the conduct of Julian the apoſtate, the

* All the references to this work may be found in the firſt quarto edition.

great

great hero of M. de Voltaire. His conduct was quite the reverſe. "The election of a "Roman Emperor made at York could not "be thought lawful at Rome. The ſanction of "the *Senatus populusque Romanus* was at leaſt "wanting." * Eutropius however aſſures us that in thoſe days they put little or no ſtreſs upon the conſent of the Senate and the Roman people for taking the government of the empire. Arms alone decided the conteſt. The choice alſo of the Senate, the Roman people and the Pretorian guards in favor of Mexentius is unfounded, though ſervilely copied by the author of the Decline and fall of the Roman empire. "Mexentius" ſays he, (vol. i. p. 409.) "inveſted with the imperial "ornaments was acknowledged by the ap-"plauding Senate and people as the protector "of Roman freedom." The hiſtorians of thoſe days, who recount this event, declare in expreſs terms that he was choſen by the Pretorian guards alone, who had collected a mob for that purpoſe, without giving the leaſt hint of the interference of the Senate. (See Eutropius, vol. i. p. 660.)

"The money and the arms of the chri-"ſtians" ſays M. de Voltaire, "contributed

* He was an officer in Julian's army. We have an abſtract of the Roman hiſtory in ten books written by him.

"to

" to place Conſtantine on the throne. It was " this which rendered him odious to the ſe- " nate, to the people of Rome and to the Pre- " torians who had all eſpouſed the cauſe of " Maxentius his competitor." That the ſenate did not eſpouſe his cauſe has been evidently ſhown. It was, as has been ſaid, effected only by the dregs of the people, and an inſurrection of the Pretorian guards. No author whatever makes the leaſt mention that the chriſtians contributed either by arms or money to ſet Conſtantine upon the imperial throne. They tell us however that the people aſſembled in the Circus gave him the title of *invincible*, in the very preſence of Maxentius. We are alſo informed that Conſtantine gained immortal honor for the four victories he obtained at Turin, Breſcia, Verona, and under the walls of Rome, and that he was beloved for his clemency towards the vanquiſhed. We read alſo * that he releaſed ſeveral

* Eumenes, in his panegyric on Conſtantine the great. He was contemporary with that Emperor. The author of the Decline and Fall, &c. aſſerts, p. 417. note 35. that " Eumenes has undoubtedly repreſented the whole affair " in the moſt favorable light for his ſovereign. Yet " from his partial naraative we may conclude that the

ſeveral ſenators who had been impriſoned, and recalled others who had been driven into baniſhment, but no where do we find that his conduct rendered him odious to the ſenate, the people of Rome, and the Pretorian guards; or that the money and the arms of the chriſtians contributed to place the diadem on his head. All theſe are anecdotes forged in the brain of the French poet. In the next place M. de Voltaire cenſures the deportment of Conſtantine at the council of Nicea, and in particular the ſplendid appearance he made at that aſſembly. "We find him" ſays he, "convoking and opening the council, march-"ing through the midſt of the fathers with "the diadem on his head, and his robes all "covered with precious ſtones; taking to him-"ſelf the moſt exalted ſtate; baniſhing ſome-"times Arius, at others Athanaſius. He ſet

"repeated clemency of Conſtantine, and the reiterated "treaſons of Maximian, as they are deſcribed by Lactan-"tius, and copied by the moderns, are deſtitute of any "hiſtorical foundation." Aurelius Victor and Eutropius, both pagan hiſtorians as has been obſerved, *poſitively* ſpeak however of the reiterated treaſons of Maximian towards Conſtantine, and in conſequence that he juſtly deſerved his death. (pages as above.)—What authentic information can the reader acquire from modern philoſophy?

"himſelf

"himſelf at the head of the chriſtians, with-
"out being a chriſtian himſelf; *for in theſe*
"*early days, ſuch were not deemed chriſtians who*
"*had not been baptized.*" To paſs over the abſurdity of this laſt paſſage, it may be aſked why he ſhould cenſure Conſtantine for appearing in all the pomp and grandeur of Majeſty at ſuch an auguſt aſſembly, as that council certainly was? Could there be one more ſo, wherein above 300 prelates were aſſembled, many of whom bore the marks of their ſufferings for their faith? Is it not uſual for princes to go in great pomp and ſtate to great aſſemblies? But "he was all covered with "precious ſtones." So was Diocleſian, to whom M. de Voltaire imputes it not as a crime. Moreover he would have himſelf adored as a God, (as Eutropius informs us, p. 660.) of which that French writer takes no notice. He adds that "he opened the coun-
"cil, and put himſelf at the head of it with-
"out being a chriſtian himſelf." Euſebius of Ceſarea, and Theodoret, both better judges of the tranſactions of thoſe days than M. de Voltaire, aſſure us that Conſtantine appeared at the aſſembly with the utmoſt reſpect for the fathers; that he expreſſed in the warmeſt terms the joy he felt at ſeeing the heads of ſo

many churches aſſembled together, and rejoiced that he was able to afford them his protection and ſupport. The baniſhment of Arius was in conſequence of the anathema pronounced againſt him by the council. Athanaſius was exiled through the intrigues of Euſebius of Nicomedia, who was a hidden Arian. Conſtantine had no other concern with either, but to ſupport the decrees of the council by his authority. To ſum up in a few words the whole catalogue of crimes imputed to this Emperor, M. de Voltaire expreſſes himſelf as follows. "Would you "know the character of Conſtantine? Inquire "of Julian and of Zozimus. They will tell "you that at firſt he acted like a good prince, "afterwards like a public robber; that dur-"ing the latter part of his reign he was pro-"digal, effeminate, and debauched. At all "times they deſcribe him to have been of a "cruel and ſanguinary diſpoſition. Search "for his character in Euſebius, in Gregory "of Nazianzen, or in Lactantius. They will "tell you that he was a man without fault or "blemiſh. Between theſe two extremes how "are we to decide? By facts. He obliged "his father-in-law to hang himſelf. He cau-"ſed his brother-in-law to be ſtrangled; his

"nephew

"nephew about twelve or thirteen years of "age to be murdered: his own ſon to be be-"headed, and his wife to be ſuffocated in a "bath." Such is the horrible portrait which M. de Voltaire draws of Conſtantine. Let us examine if the picture be not overcharged, and the dark ſide of the profile preſented to us. "He obliged his father-in-law to hang "himſelf." His father-in-law was Maximian Hercules, whoſe daughter Fauſta Conſtantine had married for his ſecond wife. The character which the Pagan hiſtorians give of Maximian is of the moſt deteſtable nature. They inform us that having abdicated the empire with Diocleſian, he ſolicited him to reſume it by force. He endeavoured in conſequence to make the army revolt againſt his ſon Maxentius, whom he himſelf had created *Auguſtus*, and ſtrove to tear the crown from his head in a public aſſembly. Not being able to ſucceed, and fearing for his life, he took refuge with Conſtantine, who was then in Gaul, feigning to have been baniſhed by his ſon, as Eutropius informs us. (lib. 10.) Here he attempted ſeveral times the life of Conſtantine, and even endeavoured to make his own daughter Fauſta the accomplice of his horrid deſign. For which, though ſeveral former

former attempts of the like nature had been forgiven, ſays Eutropius (as above) he was deſervedly put to death. The juſt puniſhment of this inhuman and un-natural wretch is the firſt crime, with which M. de Voltaire charges Conſtantine. "He cauſed his brother-in-"law to be beheaded, and his nephew to be "murdered." The former was Licinius, the latter Licinian. Aurelius Victor, p. 633, gives a worſe and more deteſtable character, if poſſible, of Licinius, than Eutropius had done in regard of Maximian and Maxentius. Nevertheleſs they ſeem to blame Conſtantine's ambition as a motive which tempted him to put them out of the way; yet neither the ſafety of Conſtantine's life, or the peace of the empire were compatible with their exiſtence, we evidently learn from their own conceſſions. "Conſtantine," ſays M. de Voltaire, "or-"dered his own ſon to be beheaded, and his "own wife to be ſuffocated in a bath." This ſon, Criſpus by name, was by his former wife Minervina. Fauſta, the daughter of Maximian Galerus, as has been ſaid, his mother-in-law, was either ſuppoſed to be in love with Criſpus, or ſought to remove him out of the way in favor of her own children. Be that as it may, ſhe accuſed him of attempting her

her virtue. Conſtantine too haſty of belief, ordered him to immediate execution. Being afterwards informed of his wife's vile artifice, he commanded that ſhe ſhould be ſuffocated in a bath. Theſe are certainly very great blemiſhes in the character of Conſtantine, yet we cannot but lament the domeſtic misfortunes in his family which gave riſe to them. Neither ancient or modern hiſtorians deſcribe him as a *perfect man, without fault or blemiſh*, as M. de Voltaire is pleaſed to inſinuate. He certainly had more virtues and fewer faults than moſt of his predeceſſors, and upon the whole merited the title of *great*, which hiſtory has uniformly conferred upon him. To be convinced of it, we need only attend to the character which the pagans themſelves have given of him. Eutropius, after enumerating his virtues, and yet not ſuppreſſing his faults, ſays that *he deſerved to be placed among the gods.* (lib. 10. p. 661.) Aurelius Victor informs us that the many beneficial acts which he cauſed to be done in favor of the people made him be looked upon *as a God*, and ſuch was the love and reverence they had for him, they greatly lamented that his body ſhould be tranſported to Conſtantinople. (p. 624.) As to the apparition of the croſs, it is a fact which

muſt

depend upon the ſtrength of the evidence. To judge therefore with ſome degree of probability we need only adduce the one, and oppoſe to it what M. de Voltaire aſſerts upon the ſubject. It is not ſufficient to ſay that it is incredible, becauſe it is out of the common courſe of nature. That God can do all things, none but atheiſts will deny. That he wrought miracles to eſtabliſh the chriſtian religion is a fact, otherwiſe there would not be a ſingle chriſtian in the world. The goſpel declares that they were the miracles of Jeſus Chriſt which drew diſciples after him. He gave the ſame power to his apoſtles and their ſucceſſors who ſhall believe through their preaching, and this without any limitation either of time or perſons. (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) Shall we preſume to ſay, that the hand of God was ſhortened at that very period which he ſeems to have choſen for the completion of his deſigns? This reflection premiſed, we will attend to the arguments of which Monſieur de Voltaire makes uſe of to invalidate the relation given of it. He ſays in his general Hiſtory, chap. 5. that "learned antiquaries have "ſufficiently refuted theſe errors, which are "ſo repugnant to philoſophy and ſound cri-"ticiſm.—All theſe imitations of the palla-

"dium

" dium of Troy tend only to give a fabulous " appearance to truth." To this period the authority of three or four contemporary witneſſes may be oppoſed ; the teſtimony likewiſe of Conſtantine himſelf, who ratified it upon oath. It is ſaid, that there are medals of Conſtantius, the ſon of Conſtantine, ſtill extant, on which is repreſented a croſs and the words *In this ſign you ſhall conquer*. " Some" ſays he, " ſuppoſe that this ſign in the heavens " appeared to him at Beſançon, others at Co- " logne; many believe it to have been at " Treves, others again at Troyes. It is ra- " ther ſurpriſing that heaven ſhould have ex- " plained itſelf in Greek on this occaſion. " It would have been more adapted to the " weak lights of human nature had it appeared " in Italy, and on the day of battle; but then " it would have been neceſſary that the in- " ſcription ſhould have been in Latin. Loi- " ſel, a learned antiquarian, has refuted this " ancient tale, but he has been treated as a " miſcreant for his pains." But where did Mr. Voltaire learn that the inſcription was in Greek? On the medals of Conſtantius it is in Latin, although the ſeat of the empire was then at Conſtantinople. Euſebius being himſelf a Greek, it was natural, when he re-

lated the event, that he ſhould write it in his own language. It would have been ſurpriſing had he done otherwiſe. The variety of opinions concerning the ſpot where this phenomenon appeared, in no manner detracts from the certainty of it Euſebius ſays that it was ſeen in Gaul. Subſequent writers have made various conjectures about the particular ſpot. "It would have been more natural if it had "appeared in Italy, &c." Why ſo? Could not Almighty God give to Conſtantine in any part of the globe aſſurances of his protection, previous to the very moment. "A learned "antiquarian has refuted this ancient tale, "for which he has been treated as a miſ-"creant." If Loiſel was ignorant of the proofs which are adduced in ſupport of it, he certainly does not deſerve to be ranked amongſt the learned. If he was not, and ſuppreſſed them, the epithet was not miſapplied. For further information the reader may conſult Baluze who, in his notes on Lactantius, has thoroughly canvaſſed the ſubject, and given ſuch proofs in favor of his opinion as appear incontrovertible. Many of our learned countrymen alſo have done as much. Surely theſe authorities, though they may not carry conviction to every mind, muſt have a greater degree

degree of probability, than the vague, unſupported aſſertions of the French poet, whoſe uniform deſigns ſeems to have been to impoſe on the credulity of his readers.

Article II.

The inhumanity of the Ancients towards their Slaves.

Almoſt all the ancient governments abandoned, without reſerve, the ſlaves of both ſexes to the luſt and brutality of their maſters. It is impoſſible to deſcribe to what exceſſes this permiſſion gave birth, even amongſt nations that are propoſed to us as models of wiſe governments. Yet ſlaves are men. The misfortune of their birth does not authoriſe us to treat them with inhumanity, cruelty and injuſtice. The Pagans however were utter ſtrangers to this maxim. It is incredible to what exceſs of barbarity they abuſed the power which the laws gave over them. A maſter had the power of life and death over his ſlaves, and too often they exerciſed it, as for example a Vadius Pollio who ordered one of his ſlaves to be thrown into a fiſh-pond to feed his fiſh. And for what reaſon? Becauſe he

had broken a wine glaſs*. Nay, he uſually fed his fiſh with his ſlaves. "Murenas ſan-"guine humano ſaginabat†." Examples of this kind were very frequent, the life of a ſlave being deemed of no importance, unleſs by the hand of avarice. They looked upon them as beaſts of burden; *pecudum numero*, that is the expreſſion of the law. For the moſt trivial faults they were treated with the greateſt cruelty. At Sparta, let ſlaves be uſed ever ſo barbarouſly they could not reclaim the protection of the laws. They were obliged every year to receive a certain number of ſtripes, although they had not deſerved puniſhment, merely that they might not forget the duty of obedience. If any of them ſeemed to be above his condition by the elegance of his figure, he was condemned to die, and his maſter fined for retaining ſuch as might by their outward appearance offend the eyes of the citizens. The Spartans, by their laws were authoriſed to fall upon the *Helotes*, their ſlaves, whilſt they were employed in the works of huſbandry; and without mercy they would frequently deſtroy the ableſt men amongſt

* Seneca de ira, lib. iii. p. 64.

† Ibid. de clementia, lib. i. p. 201.

them,

them, for no other reaſon, than for exerciſe, and to prevent them from becoming too populous. At Rome they were often loaded with chains, and otherwiſe mal-treated, as it happened to Epictetus the * philoſopher, who wes the ſlave of Epaphroditus, an officer belonging to the Emperor Nero. The Roman laws ordained that if a ſlave ſhould kill his maſter, all the other ſlaves, however numerous, ſhould be equally put to death. Tacitus relates that Pedanius Secundus, the Governor of Rome in the reign of the Emperor Nero, being ſlain by one of his ſlaves, all the reſt, though four hundred in number, were put to death. It was long debated if the rigour of the law ſhould not be mitigated in this ca'e, but finally decreed that the ancient ſtatute ſhould be enforced. They were executed accordingly†.

It would be endleſs to give a minute detail of the inhumanity of the Pagans reſpecting their ſlaves. A benevolent ſyſtem, like

* The Moſaic law, more wiſe, did not give to maſters that tyrannical power. It ordained that if the maſter in ſtriking a ſlave, put out an eye or broke a tooth, he ſhould emancipate him. (Exodus, ch. 21—26—27.) And if he killed him, he was liable to be capitally puniſhed for it.

† Annal. lib. xix. p. 184, 185.

chriſtianity,

chriſtianity, was much wanting to remedy this flagrant evil, whereby thoſe unhappy beings might b. re-inſtated in the natural rights of mankind. It had ſcarcely begun to dawn upon the world, when Conſtantine declared all thoſe guilty of murder who ſhould by ill uſage cauſe the death of their ſlaves. Theodoſius, ſirnamed the great, mitigated ſtill more the deplorable ſtate of ſlavery. Finally chriſtianity, gaining ground, entirely ſuppreſſed the inhuman cuſtom of procuring and retaining ſlaves*. —A ſecond proof of the advantages and bleſſings which have accrued to the world by the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity.

Article III.

The barbarous and un-natural combats of their Gladiators.

Here we exhibit another ſcene of inhumanity, which equally gives us an inſight

* The revival of ſlavery within theſe two laſt centuries, and the horrid ſhape in which it appears in America, muſt be attributed to that want of faith, and to that degeneracy of morals which we are taught by the very Founder of Chriſtianity to expect in latter times. Even mitigated as the ſtate of ſlavery is, it ſhocks the ideas of many well meaning people, as the efforts, which are at preſent made in Parliament to get it aboliſhed, teſtify.

into

into the barbarous cuſtoms and manners of the ancients. The firſt riſe of the Gladiators is referred to the ancient cuſtom of killing perſons at the funerals of great men. The heathens ſuppoſed that the ghoſts of the deceaſed were appeaſed by the effuſion of human blood. Achilles ſacrificed Hector to Patrocles; Æneas ſlew Turnus to appeaſe the manes of Pallas. At firſt the Pagans uſed to buy captives, or rebel ſlaves, and offer them at the obſequies of their friends. Afterwards they contrived to veil over this impious barbarity with the ſpecious ſhow of pleaſure, and voluntary combat. Training therefore ſuch wretches, as they had procured, in the management of the offenſive weapons then in uſe, upon a certain day appointed for the ſacrifices to the departed objects, they obliged them to maintain a mortal encounter at their tombs. The firſt ſhow of Gladiators exhibited in Rome was that of Marcus and Decimus Brutus upon the death of their father*. Within a little time, when they found the people ſo much delighted with theſe bloody entertainments, they were reſolved to give them the like diverſions as often as poſſible,

* Valerius Maximus, lib. 2. p. 168.

and

and therefore it ſoon became a faſhion. Not only the heirs of great and wealthy citizens in honor of their deceaſed relations, but all the principal magiſtrates entertained the people with theſe ſhows. Nay the very prieſts ſometimes exhibited theſe impious ſcenes, for we meet with the *ludi pontificales* in Suetonius*, and with the *ludi ſacerdotales* in Pliny†. The Emperors amuſed the people with theſe ſhows on frequent occaſions, as on their birth days, on thoſe of a triumph after any ſignal victory; at the conſecration of any public edifice, &c. And as the occaſions for theſe ſolemnities were ſo prodigiouſly increaſed, ſo in the ſame manner was the duration of them, and the number of combatants. Julius Ceſar, in his Edilſhip, brought three hundred and twenty pair of Gladiators upon the ſtage‡. And Trajan, tho' naturally ſo averſe to cruelty exhibited no leſs than one thouſand couple. Nero preſented at one ſhow four hundred ſenators, and ſix hundred Roman knights, who did not bluſh to engage in ſuch a vile and brutal conteſt. Frequently ſuch numbers of Gladiators aſſembled to cut each other's

* Vol. 2. p. 19. in Auguſtum.

† Epiſt. 34. p. 183.

‡ Plutarch in Ceſar.

throats

throats that the Senate was obliged to interpoſe, and by its authority endeavour to prevent the effuſion of ſo much human blood. The Emperors however paid very little deference to the decrees of the Senate. For the very women engaged in theſe public encounters, particularly under the Emperors Nero and Domitian, a ſcene equally indecent as cruel. Juvenal has expoſed this impious folly with great ſpirit in his ſixth ſatire.

" They turn viragoes too, the wreſtler's toil
" They try, and ſmear their naked limbs with oil.
" Againſt the poſt their wicker ſhields they cruſh,
" Flouriſh the ſword, and at the plaſtron puſh.
" Of every exerciſe the Man'niſh crew
" Fulfills the parts, and oft excells us too.
" Prepared not only in feigned battles io engage,
" But rout the Gladiators on the ſtage."

In fine, theſe barbarous ſhews were ſo much in faſhion, and ſo much to the taſte of the people, that they were introduced at all their public feaſts, as an eſſential part of the entertainment. In conſequence of which, the ground whereon they met frequently reſembled a field of battle. Torrents of * blood ſuc-

† We cannot ſufficiently admire the wiſdom of the Jewiſh Legiſlator in guarding againſt an evil of ſuch magnitude; for nothing can be more alarming than when

ſucceeded torrents of wine. When the appetite was ſatiated with feaſting, the mind was glutted with the ſight of theſe horrid and mutual maſſacres. The abolition of theſe inhuman practices, more adapted to the brute creation, than to men endowed with reaſon and reflexion, was effected alſo by Conſtantine the great about the year of the city 1067, nearly ſix hundred years after their firſt inſtitution. Yet under the Emperors Conſtantius, Theodoſius and Valentine the ſame cruel diverſions began to revive, till a final ſtop was put to them by the Emperor Honorius in the 4th century. A third proof of the advantages and bleſſings for which the world ſtands indebted to chriſtianity.

the people become familiariſed with blood. Whut a dreadful example we have of it before our eyes in France! One of the firſt prohibitions in the decalogue is againſt murder. *Thou ſhalt not kill.* The Jews were poſitively forbid to touch blood. One motive for it war undoubtedly to make them reſpect the lives of their fellow-creatures.

Article IV.

The flagrant extortion of Uſurers among the Greeks and Romans.

He who only exacted 12 per cent for the yearly intereſt of a ſum lent was eſteemed a very honeſt man in the eyes of the Romans. Yet nothing was more common, and even authoriſed, than cent. per cent. *(centeſima)* payable every month. "At firſt" ſays Tacitus, "it was ordained by the laws of the "twelve tables that no man ſhould take "higher intereſt than twelve in the hundred, "when before it was exacted at the pleaſure "of the rich*." But when it related to the neceſſary articles of life, the caſe of the unfortunate debtor was ſtill more deplorable, as it obliged him at the end of the year to return half the quantity more than he had received, which among the Romans was called *Seſquialtra.* For example. The man who borrowed a buſhel of corn, was obliged to return one and a half. Uſury however was much more oppreſſive among the Greeks, becauſe they

* Tranſlated by Gordon, Vol. 2. B. 2. p. 358, &c.

had

had no fixed rate for the intereſt of money. The will and pleaſure of the lender determined it. And thus it was ordained by the *wiſe* Solon, the Athenian legiſlator.

The twelve per cent, as Livy relates, began with the Roman republic, and though many laws were made to reduce it, it thus continued to the deſtruction of the empire. For as Tacitus informs us that among the ſenators, of this fault not a ſoul was guiltleſs *; ſo the uſurers, who were very numerous, and no ways apprehenſive of the laws, were not content with ſo trifling a profit. Wherefore they contrived matters in ſuch a manner as to double their capitals in two or three years time, and often in leſs. That we may judge of the evils which theſe exceſſive uſuries occaſioned, we need only appeal to the abovementioned Tacitus. "Uſury," ſays he, "was "in truth an inveterate evil in Rome, and "the eternal cauſe of civil diſcord and ſedi-"tions †."

To give a finiſhing deſcription of the flagrant extortion of the uſurers, we may obſerve that among the Greeks and Romans the

* Vol. 2. B. 2. p. 358, &c.
† Annal. vol. 2. p. 149.

creditors

creditors were impowered by the laws to ſell their debtors for ſlaves, and even to put them to death in failure of payment at the ſtated time. "If the debtor" (ſays the 6th art. of the laws of the twelve tables) "be inſolvent "to ſeveral creditors, let his body be cut in "pieces on the third market day. It may "be * cut into more or fewer pieces with im-"punity. Or, if his creditors conſent to it, "let him be ſold to foreigners beyond the "Tiber †." The laws permitted alſo the uſe of chains, not exceeding ‡ fifteen pounds weight. It was a curious law indeed which was to prohibit creditors to cruſh their debtors under the weight of chains!

* Some modern critics have maintained that this law only permitted the creditors to divide amongſt them the property, not the limbs of the debtor. For the honor of human nature we wiſh it was ſo. But the words of the law are preciſe, and it was thus underſtood by the Roman writers themſelves.

† Hooke's Rom. Hiſt. vol. 2. p. 319.

‡ This was one of the laws enacted by the Decemvirs, partly with a view to mitigate the ancient laws againſt debtors. Hence we may judge how ſevere they muſt have been under the ſanction of thoſe laws. Creditors treated their debtors with ſuch barbarity that it excited a general inſurrection of the plebeians againſt the great and opulent. (See Livy, Decade 1.)

Creditors

Creditors were alſo authorized to ſeize the corpſe of a debtor, and prevent its * burial, which, according to the idea of the Pagans, was the greateſt infamy, and the moſt ſignal misfortune that could befal them.

" Thoſe who neglected on the ſtrand remain,
" Are all a wretched, poor, unburied train." †

Livy, who in ſeveral parts of his hiſtory makes mention of the diſturbances which this grievous evil occaſioned in the ſtate, relates ſeveral precautions that were taken from time to time to remedy it, by drawing money from the public funds to pay the debts of thoſe who were diſtreſſed by the uſurers. He nevertheleſs ſpeaks not of any puniſhment denounced againſt them, or of any penalty they were ſubjected to for this infamous traffic.

Among Chriſtians the civil law condemns uſurers to fines and diverſe other penalties. The eccleſiaſtical law deprives them, among other puniſhments, of chriſtian burial ‡. The Pagans carried on the trade of uſury as publicly as if it had been the moſt legal and in-

* The ſame law exiſts amongſt us; but we do not affix the ſame conſequences to it after death.

† Wharton's Virgil.

‡ See Burn's Eccleſ. Law, Art. Uſury.

nocent

nocent of profeſſions. Among Chriſtians the uſurer diſguiſes himſelf, and hides his head. that he may eſcape the merited cenſure of mankind, and the rigour of the laws.

This is a fourth proof of the bleſſings and advantages which ſociety has derived from the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity.

Article V.

The continual ſubverſion of their ſtates, and aſſaſſination of their princes.

If we dive into the annals of the world, and attentively conſider the various ſhocks and revolutions which the different ſtates of the univerſe have ſuſtained, we ſhall plainly perceive that it is ſince the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity only that ſuch dreadful, and calamitous ſcenes are become leſs frequent. Let us, for example, take a ſhort view of the Roman empire. From the day that Rome was founded by Romulus, to the period wherein it became Chriſtian under the emperor Conſtantine, that is nearly for the ſpace of one thouſand years, what a ſeries of troubles, what ſeditions, what maſſacres and murders occur! This famous city was at firſt governed

verned by ſeven kings. Of theſe ſeven kings, three were maſſacred, and the fourth dethroned, and proſcribed. Upon the ruins of monarchy, a republic was eſtabliſhed. This form of government ſcarcely exiſted twenty years, when there aroſe a miſunderſtanding between the nobility and the people. The latter retired in a tumultuous manner from the capital, and ravaged the country. In conſequence of which the former were obliged to ſubmit to their terms, and to agree to the creation of two magiſtrates, by name of Tribunes; who, under the ſpecious pretext of protecting the people from the oppreſſions of the great, perpetually fomented and kept up a conſtant diviſion between both parties.

This ſpirit of faction operated ſo violently on the minds of the people, that during three whole centuries and upwards the ſtate was convulſed by conſtant broils and ſeditions. The evil ſtill increaſed, inſomuch that at the time of the Gracchi, Rome reſembled a field of battle, where the citizens cut and hacked each other to pieces without any regard to the ties of blood or friendſhip with as much virulence and animoſity as againſt the moſt inveterate enemy.

About

About fifty years after this period, the ſame fury and rancour was rekindled by the civil wars of Marius and Sylla, in conſequence of which Rome, Italy, Greece, and Spain overflowed with Roman blood. Neither birth, dignity, or alliance could eſcape the reciprocal proſcriptions of the contending parties. Scarcely was there a family to be ſeen which had not its particular mourning; and thoſe very inſignia of grief and woe added freſh fuel to minds heated with rancour and revenge. To this ſad period ſucceeded a long ſeries of civil wars. Fifteen months after the death of Sylla, Cataline conſpired againſt his country, and died with his ſword in his hand. Ceſar, a few years afterwards, adopted the ſame project; who, for the misfortune of his country, being a man of greater abilities, overthrew the republic; made himſelf maſter of the whole empire; and, after five years ſpent in civil diſcord, was aſſaſſinated in the very ſenate-houſe by his boſom-friend Brutus. His death gave riſe to farther feuds and broils which revived all the horrors of civil war occaſioned by Marius and Sylla. This was the famous triumvirate of Octavius, Anthony and Lepidus. The former having got the aſcendant, Rome,

by his wife adminiſtration, once more recovered from its former calamities. This period of tranquillity nevertheleſs was of ſhort duration, being ſoon after overwhelmed by the vices of the inhuman and profligate Tiberius, Caligula and Nero. At the death of this laſt monſter, the civil wars recommenced under Otho, Galba, and Vitellius. Veſpaſian happily reſtored tranquillity, and reigned alone. From this period to that of Conſtantine, that is for the ſpace of two hundred and ſixty years, we may remark the civil wars of Caſſius under Marcus Aurelius, of Didius Julianus, of Niger, of Albinus under Septimus Severus, and of Maximin who dethroned Alexander. The Gordians and the Philips died by the hands of their own ſoldiers. The ſpirit of ſedition continued under the Emperors Florianus, Probus, Carus and Numerian. It was blood alone that could decide the fate of the world. We may look however upon thoſe civil wars as the laſt, which were waged between Conſtantine and Maxentius, and afterwards between the former and Licinius, at which period chriſtianity began to get the aſcendant. Thus it appears that of the ſeven kings of Rome, three were maſſacred, and one dethroned. Of the twelve Ceſars, there were only

only three or four who died of natural deaths. Of forty Emperors, from the time of Domitian to Conſtantine the Great, more than one half of them periſhed by the hands of their rebellious ſubjects. If from the Romans we paſs to the Greeks, we find the ſame ſpirit of ſedition and maſſacre. The whole family and deſcendants of Alexander the Great came to an untimely end. Moſt of the kings of Syria died either by poiſon, or the ſword. Of eighteen princes, from Seleucus the firſt to Demetrius the laſt of the name, ten at leaſt periſhed by rebellious hands. The Lagides in Egypt afford as ſhocking inſtances in that reſpect as the ſucceſſors of Seleucus in Syria.

If from the Greeks we take a ſurvey of the Arabs, the ſame bloody ſcenes occur. Omar, Alli, Moavi, Othman, Huſſan, Ibrahim were all aſſaſſinated within the year. During this melancholy period what deeds of oppreſſion, treachery, and maſſacre were perpetrated! Motkar alone boaſted that he had put fifty thouſand Ommiades to death; and Abdallah Mahomet the firſt Calif of the Abaſſides, called himſelf *Saffah*, that is *the Deſtroyer*, on account of the horrible maſſacre which, by his order, was committed on

the princes of the Ommiades, and their adherents throughout the whole empire.

In fine, one age of paganiſm preſents infinitely more examples of theſe enormous crimes than are to be found in all the chriſtian monarchies put together during fifteen centuries. If the paſſions and vices incident to human nature, which the chriſtian religion condemns, but which ſhe has not always the power to reſtrain, have cauſed ſuch melancholy ſcenes from time to time, what are they in compariſon to the perpetual feuds, broils, ſeditions, and maſſacres which deſolated the æra of paganiſm? It is therefore an inconteſtable fact that, were it in this point of view only, the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity has been an invaluable bleſſing to the world. "Thanks to the goſpel," ſays M. Bergier, "we ſhall never again * ſee a Paulus Emi-"lius deſtroy in one ſingle province ſeventy "towns, and put in chains one hundred and "fifty thouſand citizens. We ſhall never again "hear a furious Cato concluding his ha-

* He little ſuſpected at the time he wrote that his countrymen would turn their backs upon the goſpel to which they were indebted for the mildneſs of their manners. Having diſcarded it, they are falling faſt into the ſame exceſſes as the ancient Pagans.

"rangues

"rangues in the Senate with theſe words of a "madman: *delenda eſt Carthago*; *Carthage muſt* "*be deſtroyed.* We ſhall no more brag of the "exploits of a Scipio Africanus, whoſe rage "could not be ſatisfied with any thing leſs "than the burning of that unhappy city. We "ſhall never again ſtand in fear of a brutal "Mummius ſacking, deſtroying, and burning "the moſt beautiful city in Greece, becauſe "its glory eclipſed Rome; or of puniſhing "thouſands of innocent people for the mad-"neſs of two or three ſeditious perſons. If "the laſt * war, in which all Europe was en-"gaged, had been carried on by ſuch heroes "as theſe, Germany at this day had been no-"thing but a frightful deſert†."

* He means the ſeven years war.

† Deiſm ſelf-refuted, vol. 2. p. 130.

Article VI.

The ſhocking extravagance of Idolatry.

The firſt and moſt reſpectable Deity among the heathens was Jupiter, who, according to their mythology, is repreſented as guilty of inceſt and adultery, a parricide, a ſeducer and debaucher of female virtue. He dethroned his father Saturn. He married his ſiſter Juno; had likewiſe ſeveral other wives, and a prodigious number of children by his gallantries. He transformed himſelf into a ſatyr to poſſeſs Antiope; into a bull to carry off Europa; into a ſwan to debauch Leda; into a golden ſhower to corrupt Danae, and into divers other ſhapes to ſatisfy his paſſions." "Ancient paganiſm," ſays Rouſſeau, "brought "forth moſt abominable gods, who would have "been puniſhed here below as villains; and "who held forth, as a picture of ſupreme hap-"pineſs, nothing but the commiſſion of crimes, "and the gratification of the paſſions*." Jupiter had Bacchus by Semele; Pallas by Thetis; Diana and Apollo by Latona, and was the ſuppoſed father of Mercury, and many other ſuch Gods. To the queen of heaven (Juno) they attributed all thoſe evil qualities which characterize bad women. Mars was

* Emile, t. iii. p. 98.

choleric

choleric and vindictive, ever delighting in blood and carnage. Venus was the object of impure love, the patroneſs of proſtitution. Apollo, according to their fables, was expelled heaven for murder and ſedition; Diana was honored with human ſacrifices. The other Deities were of the ſame complexion; and be it obſerved, that the Pagans never attributed any virtuous action to the infamous objects of their vows and adorations.

To this horrid picture we may add alſo a multitude of ridiculous Deities, ſuch as the Gods of the Egyptians, the Phenicians, the Babylonians, &c. Though the manner in which the Pagan Deities were worſhipped perfectly coincided with their characters, yet it will be better to avoid entering into a detail of their myſterious rites, and forbear to unveil the abominable ceremonies of their feaſts in honor of the *Bona Dea*, of Bacchus, of Ceres, &c. * Clemens of Alexandria, an ancient and learned Father of the Church, once a Pagan himſelf, conſequently well informed on the ſubject, treats it at large with a view of expoſing and confounding the folly and abomination of their worſhip. To relate

* He renounced the errors of paganiſm in the year 190. The works which he has left behind him, are greatly commended for their erudition.

what

what he ſays on the ſubject would only offend againſt decency, and give ſcandal without neceſſity.

Such then were the Gods mankind adored, and ſuch the modes of religious worſhip which engaged the attention of the whole world (the Jews excepted, who however often fell into the ſame extravagances) before the æra of chriſtianity. Theſe diſorders, which it is impoſſible to call in queſtion, did not ceaſe till the preaching of the goſpel. Had it not been for the rational doctrines it inculcates, they would ſtill exiſt. "It is the goſ-"pel," ſays M. Bergier, "that threw down all "the Gods one after another; that diſſipated "the dread that people every where had of "thoſe imaginary beings; that ſuppreſſed "the execrable cuſtom of appeaſing them by "human ſacrifices, by the combats of Gladia-"tors, and by the blood of their own chil-"dren. It is the goſpel that hath every where "brought the oracles, ſorcery, and every "kind of divination into diſrepute, to the "great mortification and aſtoniſhment of phi-"ſophy, which took them under its protec-"tion." "It hath" as J. J. Rouſſeau himſelf confeſſes, "ſuppreſſed, or ſoftened ſlavery, "harmonized nations, lightened the bonds of "ſociety,

"ſociety, and rendered governments leſs ſan-
"guinary. It hath retrenched the licentious
"devotions, more dear to the idolaters than
"the gods themſelves; feſtivals only fit to
"deſtroy with impunity the obligations of
"marriage, and to degrade humanity*."

If paganiſm however ſupported itſelf for ſome time after the preaching of the goſpel, it was by means only of the liberties which it allowed to its profeſſors. Thoſe, who can reflect, muſt be ſurpriſed that the world could ſo long be led aſtray by the abſurdity, folly, and extravagance of ſuch a ſyſtem. But how much more muſt we be aſtoniſhed that a religion of ſuch benevolence, a religion which enforces every ſocial duty, as chriſtianity evidently does, ſhould be ſo virulently attacked by ſo many modern writers. Some throw their envenomed ſhafts againſt it in the moſt open and indecent manner. Others, more ſubtle, make their attack in an underhand and diſguiſed method. Let it however be obſerved that none have even the charms of novelty, for not one objection, which they ſtart againſt the chriſtian religion, is of their own growth. They are the hackneyed argu-

* Deiſm ſelf-refuted, vol. 1. p. 62, 63.

ments only of prior ſceptics, which have been refuted over and over again. Our aſtoniſhment however will ceaſe when we reflect that the chriſtian religion is the declared enemy of every unruly paſſion; and that it is the corruption of the heart, and the pride of the mind which cauſe men to rebel againſt it, and make them overlook, and be inſenſible to thoſe ſignal advantages which have undoubtedly accrued to ſociety by the eſtabliſhment of it.

The ſuperexcellence of the Chriſtian Code, with a ſhort ſketch of its divine Founder.

Let us ſuppoſe a ſyſtem of philoſophy, which, by its admirable maxims, would both enlighten the underſtanding, inſtil into the human mind the pureſt notions of equity and juſtice, and conduct men into the paths of virtue and wiſdom; would not ſuch a ſyſtem be the object of their veneration and eſteem, particularly if it tended to eradicate thoſe deteſtable vices, thoſe barbarous and un-natural cuſtoms, ſuch as have been deſcribed above, and cauſe them to be ſuperſeded by humanity, temperance, and the practice of every moral virtue; if it rekindled in the hearts

hearts of men thoſe innate principles which the law of nature has engraved therein, would not ſuch a ſyſtem, once more let it be repeated, be deſervedly the object of our veneration and reſpect? The chriſtian religion teaches us this amiable philoſophy; and it is by the eſtabliſhment of it alone that theſe bleſſings and advantages have accrued to ſociety.

Were other proofs wanting to eſtabliſh the fact, we might abide by the opinion of J. J. Rouſſeau. "The goſpel, ſays he, "has "brought about the moſt happy revolution. "It has caſt down idolatry with all its extra- "vagances, all the abominations and cruelties "that originated in it. It has either ſuppreſ- "ſed, or ſoftened ſlavery, and given to the "manners of nations a mildneſs and huma- "nity which letters could never have commu- "nicated to them. It has rendered the diffe- "rent forms of government more moderate "and leſs ſanguinary, and by that means leſs "tottering and leſs expoſed to revolutions: "it has provided for the ſecurity of maſters, "and the happineſs of ſubjects*. Undoubt- "edly our modern governments are indebted "to chriſtianity for their more ſolid authority

* Emile, t. iii. p. 185.

" and their leſs frequent revolutions. It hath " rendered them leſs ſanguinary; this is " proved by facts when we compare them with " the ancient governments. Religion better " underſtood by keeping off fanaticiſm hath " introduced more mildneſs into chriſtian " manners. This alteration is not the effect " of letters; for wherever they flouriſhed, " humanity was not a jot the more reſpected; " cruelties committed in Athens, in Egypt, " and by the Roman emperors, and the Chi- " neſe atteſt this. What works of mercy are " the effects of the goſpel! What reſtitutions, " what reparations for injuries done doth not " confeſſion effect among the catholics! What " reconciliations, what alms doth not an ap- " proaching time of communion produce a- " mongſt us! How much did the jubilee a- " mongſt the Hebrews leſſen the greedineſs " of the uſurpers of other's lands!" *(ibid.)*

The preſident Monteſquieu, who valued himſelf much upon his profound reaſoning, and who was equally free in declaring his opinions as J. J. Rouſſeau, had alſo the moſt exalted idea of the advantages which ſociety derives from the eſtabliſhment of the chriſtian religion. " While the Mahometan princes," ſays he, " are continually ordering others to be

" be put to death, and are put to death them-
" ſelves, religion among chriſtians makes prin-
" ces leſs apprehenſive, and conſequently leſs
" cruel. The prince relies on his ſubjects,
" and the ſubjects on the prince. Wonder-
" ful! the chriſtian religion, which ſeems to
" have no other object than the happineſs of a
" life to come, conſtitutes moreover our hap-
" pineſs in this. It is the chriſtian religion,
" which, notwithſtanding the extent of the
" empire and the vice of the climate, hath
" hindered deſpotiſm from getting foot in
" Ethiopia, and hath introduced into the
" midſt of Africa the manners of Europe, and
" its laws. Let us on one hand place before
" our eyes the continual maſſacres of the
" kings and leaders of both Greeks and Ro-
" mans; and on the other the deſtruction of
" towns by leaders of the ſame ſtamp, Thimur
" and Gengiſken who laid waſte Aſia, and we
" ſhall ſee that it is to chriſtianity we are in-
" debted both for a fixed political law in go-
" vernment, and a fixed law of nations in
" war, which human nature cannot ſufficiently
" acknowledge*."

* Spirit of the Laws, l. 24: c, 3.

Such

Such are the bleſſings which ſociety has received from the precepts of the goſpel. What idea then can we form of the code which inculcates them, and of the legiſlator from whence they originated? The beautiful period of Rouſſeau on the ſubject will decide the queſtion. "I acknowledge," ſays he, "that the majeſty of the ſcripture ſtrikes me "with admiration; the ſanctity of the goſpel "ſpeaks to my heart. Peruſe the works of "all the philoſophers with all their pomp of "diction: how pitiful are they in compariſon "of the goſpel. Is it poſſible, that he whoſe "hiſtory it gives us, ſhould be no more than a "mere man? Is the tone he makes uſe of that "of an enthuſiaſt, or an ambitious ſectary? "What ſweetneſs! What purity in his man-"ners! What an affecting gracefulneſs in his "manner of inſtructing! What elevation in "his maxims! What profound wiſdom in his "diſcourſes! What preſence of mind, what "ſubtilty, what exactneſs in his replies! What "a command over his paſſions! Where is the "man, where is the ſage, who can act, ſuffer "and die, without weakneſs, and without "oſtentation! When Plato deſcribes his ima-"ginary *good man*, covered with all that is op-"probrious in guilt, yet meriting all the re-

"wards

" wards of virtue, he gives us a picture of Je-
" ſus Chriſt; the reſemblance of which was ſo
" ſtriking, that all the Fathers perceived it,
" and it is really impoſſible to be deceived
" therein. What prepoſſeſſion, what blind-
" neſs muſt it be to dare to compare the ſon
" of Sophroniſcus to the ſon of Mary! What
" a diſtance between the one and the other!
" Socrates dying without pain, without igno-
" miny, eaſily ſupports his character to the
" laſt; and if this, ſo eaſy a death, had not
" done honor to his life, it might have been
" doubted, whether Socrates with all his
" ſenſe, had been any thing more than a ſo-
" phiſt. He invented, it is ſaid, the ſyſtem of
" morals. Others before him, had put them in
" practice. He only ſaid what they had done,
" and reduced their examples to leſſons. A-
" riſtides had been juſt, before Socrates had
" defined what juſtice was; Leonidas had
" died for his country, before Socrates had
" made the love of our country a duty. Sparta
" had been ſober, before Socrates had re-
" commended ſobriety; Greece had abound-
" ed in virtuous men, before he had defined
" virtue. But where had Jeſus learned a-
" mong his countrymen that ſublime and pure
" morality, of which he alone has given us

" ſuch

" leſſons, and ſuch examples? The moſt ſub-
" lime wiſdom made itſelf feared in the very
" boſom of the moſt furious fanaticiſm, and the
" ſimplicity of the moſt heroic virtues did ho-
" nor to the vileſt people on earth. The
" death of Socrates philoſophizing at his eaſe
" among his friends, is the ſweeteſt death one
" could deſire; that of Jeſus expiring in tor-
" ments, abuſed, ſcoffed at, curſed by a whole
" people, is the moſt horrible that can be
" dreaded. Socrates receiving the empoi-
" ſoned cup, bleſſes the man who preſents it,
" and weeps. Jeſus, in the midſt of the exe-
" cution of a frightful puniſhment, prays for
" his mercileſs executioners. Yes, if the life
" and death of Socrates are thoſe of a ſage,
" the life and death of Jeſus are thoſe of a
" God. Shall we ſay, the hiſtory of the goſ-
" pel is a mere fiction? It hath nothing like a
" fiction in it; and the facts regarding Socra-
" tes, which no one calls in queſtion, are not
" ſo well atteſted as thoſe regarding Jeſus
" Chriſt. To ſuppoſe the goſpel a fiction is
" only ſhifting the difficulty a little, without
" removing it. It is more inconceivable that
" ſeveral perſons ſhould by agreement forge
" ſuch a book, than it is, that one perſon alone
" ſhould furniſh the ſubject of it. Never

could

"could any Jewiſh authors have found out "ſuch a manner of ſpeaking, or ſuch mora- "lity; and the goſpel hath ſuch characters "of truth, ſo grand, ſo ſtriking, ſo perfectly "inimitable, that the inventor of ſuch a "hiſtory would be a greater object of won- "der than the hero himſelf*."

M. de Voltaire however differs in opinion from Rouſſeau. Thus we ſee that modern philoſophers are not more uniform in their ſentiments than thoſe of antiquity. He maintains that the morality which the chriſtian religion inculcates is not only uſeleſs, but pernicious. It is in a word the ſource from whence all the evils which mankind experience originates. He offers indeed no proofs as uſual. According to him, morality was known and put in practice before the days of Jeſus Chriſt. "It was," ſays he, "every "where inculcated by the philoſophers. A- "mong the pagans there were more real vir- "tues than among the chriſtians†."

No body will diſpute that amongſt the pagans there were many perſons reſpectable for their virtues. Hiſtory affords many great

* Emile, t. iii. p. 165.

† Chriſt. deſcrib. p. 139.

examples of juſtice, patriotiſm, continence, &c. &c. But J. J. Rouſſeau will not allow that the beautiful ſyſtem of morality that is to be found in our books, ſhould be imputed to the progreſs of philoſophy. "Morality," ſays he, "is taken from the goſpel, and was chriſ-"tian before it was philoſophical. The chriſ-"tians taught it I confeſs without practiſing "it. But what do the philoſophers more, ex-"cept that of beſtowing on themſelves a world "of encomiums on this account, which, as "they are repeated by no body elſe, in my "opinion prove but little. The precepts of "Plato are often very ſublime, but how fre-"quently is he miſtaken? and to what ſtrange "lengths do his errors carry him? As to "Cicero, it can hardly be believed that rhe-"torician could have ever given the world "his offices, had he not borrowed from Plato. "The goſpel alone is, with regard to mora-"lity, *always certain, always true, always ſingu-"lar, and always conſiſtent* with itſelf*."

The force of truth having extorted ſuch an ample confeſſion in favor of chriſtian morality, and of its divine Founder, let us proceed to make a few reflections on the eſtabliſhment of that ſyſtem.

* 3d Letter from the Mountains, N. p. 65.

The

The eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity is one of thoſe prodigies which the event alone can verify. The greatneſs of the enterpriſe, and the feeble means to effect it, ſeemed to render its ſucceſs impoſſible. The ſurpriſing progreſs however which it made, in ſpite of almoſt inſurmountable obſtacles, muſt ſtrike every man of the leaſt reflection with wonder and aſtoniſhment. It evidently marks the interpoſition of a ſuperior power. On no other grounds can it poſſibly be accounted for. Let us ſeriouſly conſider what was the object of the undertaking. It was, in the firſt place, to convince men, who thought themſelves ſuperiourly wiſe, that they were blinded by ignorance, and miſled by folly: it was to perſuade them to relinquiſh the religions of their anceſtors, which were commodious and pleaſing; religions which in no reſpect cramped their paſſions, to embrace one that combated, and denounced war againſt them all: to propoſe to their aſſent the moſt incomprehenſible doctrines, as the moſt inconteſtable truths, and ſuch as were in their conſequences of the moſt alarming nature: to cauſe theſe doctrines to be received by a people, who were averſe to all manner of conſtraint or trouble in thinking: to prevail upon them to aboliſh

their ancient forms of worſhip, which ages had rendered reſpectable in their eyes: to make them demoliſh their temples, which had been conſtructed by public authority, and by the zeal and munificence of their princes: to induce them to pull down their idols, which they had been accuſtomed to look up to with reverence and reſpect: finally, to change their ideas ſo compleatly, as to make them look upon all their ancient practices as ſuperſtitious, impious and extravagant! Such was the undertaking, ſuch the revolution to be effected upon the minds of men! And who are they, who were deputed to bring about this aſtoniſhing revolution? Twelve poor, weak, ignorant, illiterate men; men who were deſtitute of all worldly help, ſuccour or ſupport. Theſe were the men who were to open the eyes of the ſuperſtitious, reclaim the debauchee, inſtil humility into the minds of proud philoſophers, gain attention and reſpect from the princes of the earth, cauſe the ancient religions to be proſcribed, and that of a Man, lately condemned to an ignominious death in Jeruſalem, to be received in their ſtead!

What meaſures did they take to effect this ſurpriſing and arduous revolution? In the

the firſt place, they aſtoniſh the world with their manifold virtues; virtues the moſt ſublime, the moſt heroic, the moſt pure; ſuch as were ſcarcely known, much leſs practiſed; virtues ſo ſublime, ſo excellent, that they ſeemed almoſt beyond the reach of man. They moreover put in practice all theſe admirable leſſons which they had been taught by their great Maſter. What recompence, what return do they ſeek for their pains and labour? The conſolation and happineſs only of imparting thoſe bleſſings to their fellow creatures. They covet nothing this world affords. To enlighten and meliorate the hearts of men, to devote themſelves entirely to the good and welfare of their neighbour, even at the riſk of their lives, is the ſummit of all their ambition.

In the mean time how were theſe apoſtolical men received, and what was the ſucceſs which attended their labours? It was ſuch as might be expected from men who were ſent by God, and filled with his holy Spirit; by men who were ſuperior to all fear, and to every worldly conſideration whatever.

They diſperſe; and each of them, in the country which is aſſigned to him, announces the religion of Jeſus Chriſt. In a ſhort time his

his holy name reſounds throughout the whole Roman empire, and even * beyond it, for it may be proved by authentic documents that there was ſcarcely any part of the then known globe where it was not announced, even in the days of the apoſtles. Pliny, the younger, governor of Bithynia under the emperor Trajan, gives the moſt ample teſtimony of its progreſs in the Roman empire. He informs the emperor by letter that "the chriſtians not "only fill the cities, but the villages and "fields. The chriſtian religion has been em-

* Juſtin Martyr, is ſeverely cenſured by the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, for ſaying that the chriſtian religion was ſpread throughout the world. But how could a writer of ſuch taſte and learning take a figurative expreſſion literally? Every one knows that this phraſe ſignifies no more than that it was *widely* diffuſed. It is generally underſtood ſo without any abſurdity. M. de Voltaire has been already told ſo, when he ridiculed Herodotus for relating that Seſoſtrus went out of Egypt to conquer the *whole* world. "Now "the deſign," ſays he, "of conquering the *whole* world "is one of Pierocole's projects in Rabelas;" or, as we may ſay, one of Mother Gooſe's tales. Indeed he himſelf has taken it in that limited ſenſe, when it ſuited his purpoſe. In ſpeaking of the diſciples of Mahomet, he ſays that "after their firſt victory, they fought to con-"quer the world. But to conquer the world, is to con-"quer the neighbouring provinces." (Univerſal Hiſtory.)

"braced

" braced by a very great number of people of " all ages and degrees, and that the temples " have been almoſt deſerted *." Such was the account tranſmitted by a pagan magiſtrate, who lived at the beginning of the ſecond century of the chriſtian æra.

No author however more minutely deſcribes the great increaſe of the chriſtians than † Tertullian, in the noble apology he preſented to the ſenate in their behalf. " We " are but of yeſterday," ſays he, " yet we fill " your towns, your iſlands, your colonies, " &c. If this multitude of ſubjects was to " deſert you, your empire would be depopu- " lated. There would remain with you more " enemies than citizens. The reaſon you " have fewer enemies, is becauſe all the citi- " zens are become chriſtians ‡."

For the purity and innocence of lives of the primitive chriſtians, we may appeal alſo to the teſtimony of the abovefaid Pliny. " The

* Lord Orrery's tranſlat. of Pliny, vol. 2. p. 428.

† Quintus Septimus Tertullianus was one of the greateſt men that Africa ever produced. He was the ſon of a centurior, who was proconſul of Africa. Tertullian lived to a very great age, and died about the yeat 216 in the reign of the emperor Antoninus Caracalla.

‡ Cap. 37. p. 30.

" apoſtate

" apoſtate chriſtians," he informs us, " af-
" ſimed that the ſum total of their fault, or of
" their error, conſiſted in aſſembling upon
" certain ſtated days before it was light, to
" ſing alternately among themſelves hymns to
" Chriſt, as to a God; binding themſelves by
" oath, not to be guilty of any wickedneſs;
" not to ſteal, nor to rob; not to commit
" adultery, nor break their faith when plighted,
" nor to deny the depoſites in their hands,
" whenever called upon to reſtore them.
" Theſe ceremonies performed, they uſually
" departed, and came together again to take
" a repaſt, the meat of which was innocent,
" and eat promiſcuouſly *."

" Wherefore," † ſaid Arnobius, " do you
" burn our books, and demoliſh our places of
" worſhip? Therein we adore God: therein
" we offer up our prayers for the peace and

* Vol. ii. p. 427.

† Arnobius had been a Pagan philoſopher, and profeſſor of rhetoric, at Sicca Venerea, in Africa, about the year 207. He was the maſter of Lactantius; and, after his converſion, he wrote ſeveral tracts againſt the Gentiles. " In one of theſe," he ſays, " I lately reverenced,
" oh blindneſs! ſtatues taken from the furnace; gods
" hammered upon the anvil. As if they had ſecret virtue,
" I flattered them; I ſpoke to them; I made requeſts to
" inſenſible ſtocks". (Adverſus Gentes, Lib. 1.)

" welfare

" welfare of princes and magiſtrates; for the " ſucceſs of their armies; for our friends, and " for our enemies.—We aſſiſt with all our " power, thoſe who are in penury and diſtreſs, " looking upon every man as our neigh- " bour *."

" Ye who judge criminals," ſaid Tertullian to the ſenators of Rome, " I appeal to " your regiſters if a chriſtian is to be found of " that number. Thoſe who fill your priſons, " who work in the mines, who are expoſed to " wild beaſts, are of your own perſuaſion. There " *is not a chriſtian* to be found therein, unleſs " it be for his religion. If for any other " cauſe, he is not a chriſtian †."

‡ Athanagoras ſpoke to the ſame effect be-

* Ib. Lib. 4, p. 53.

† Apol. cap. 44. p. 34.—The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, diſcanting upon this paſſage, ſays that " Tertullian with an honeſt pride " could boaſt, that *very few* chriſtians had ſuffered by " the hands of the executioner, except on account of " religion." (p. 481.) But Tertullian's words are, *not one chriſtian. Nemo illic chriſtianus, niſi pro religione ſua.* The author's traſlation therefore is not accurate, and conſequently the ignorant reader is impoſed upon.

‡ He was a pagan philoſopher of Athens in the ſecond century, and became a convert to chriſtianity. He diſtinguiſhed himſelf eminently by his zeal and learning. He wrote an apology for the chriſtians, which he preſented to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

fore Tertullian. " No chriſtian is wicked " unleſs he belies his profeſſion *."

† Minutius Felix expreſſes himſelf after the ſame manner. " The priſons," ſays he, " overflow with your criminals. No chriſtian " is to be found therein, if not for his religion. " —If for any other cauſe, he is an apo- " ſtate ‡."

The reproaches of the Pagan Cæcilius (See Minutius Felix, as above) againſt the chriſtians make undoubtedly their panegyric. " Always fearful," ſays he, " you deprive your- " ſelves of innocent amuſements. You never " frequent the theatres; you aſſiſt not at the " public feaſts; you abhor the offered meats " and the choſen libations of our altars." The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, like Cæcilius, has unwittingly it may be ſuppoſed, made their panegyric, when at the ſame time he meant to cenſure the conduct of the chriſtians. For we read in page 465, that " the dangerous temptations, " which on every ſide lurked in ambuſh to " ſurpriſe the unguarded believer, aſſailed him

* Legat pro chriſtianis ad Marcum Aurelium.

† He was a diſtinguiſhed Roman orator.

‡ P. 41, 42, De idolorum vanitate, &c.

" with

"with redoubled violence on thoſe ſolemn "(feſtival) days. So artfully were they framed "and diſpoſed throughout the year, that ſu- "perſtition always wore the appearance of "pleaſure, and often of virtue. Hence their panegyric for abſenting themſelves from theſe feſtivals. In a ſubſequent paſſage however the author cenſures them for it. "The "chriſtians," ſays he, "were not leſs averſe "to buſineſs, than to the pleaſures of the "world.—Their ſimplicity was offended by "the uſe of oaths, by the pomp of magiſtracy, "and by the active contentions of public "life.—This indolent and even criminal diſ- "regard to the public welfare, expoſed them "to the contempt and reproaches of the "Pagans." Nevertheleſs Julian, the apoſtate, bears teſtimony to their virtue, and acknowledges the generous diſpoſitions of the chriſtians, in relieving the diſtreſſed and neceſſitous of every deſcription. (Epiſt. ad Arſacem.)

It may not be improper here to obſerve, that, as Conſtantine has been the object of M. de Voltaire's ſevereſt ſatire, ſo has Julian, been ſet forth by him, in the higheſt ſtrain of panegyric. The reaſon is obvious. Conſtantine protected the chriſtians, and ſhewed a

predilection for their religion. Julian apoſtatized from that religion in which he was educated, and perſecuted its adherents. A ſhort ſketch of his conduct in life, as related by the Pagan hiſtorians themſelves, will enable us to judge of his deſerts. Julian was the ſon of Julius Conſtantius, the brother of Conſtantine the great. He was born at Conſtantinople, A. D. 331. Euſebius, biſhop of Nicomedia, who was his near relation, was charged with the care of his education. He was accordingly, as has been ſaid, educated in the principles of the chriſtian religion. Unfortunately however he attached himſelf at an early period of life, to the Pagan philoſopher Maximus, who flattered his ambition with the hopes of ſucceeding to the empire. In conſequence of this, he applied himſelf to the ſtudy of the occult ſciences, and gave into all the ſuperſtitious practices of the Pagans. It was this deteſtable curioſity of diving into futurity, which was the more immediate cauſe of his apoſtacy. On all hands he is allowed to have been poſſeſſed of many of thoſe great qualities which conſtitute the hero; and, under proper reſtrictions, that form the philoſopher. But they were counter-balanced by ſome of the moſt deteſtable

vices,

vices, which made Abbè Fleury juſtly remark, that "there was ſuch a mixture of good and "bad qualities in his diſpoſition, that judging "by one ſide of the profile only, it would be "eaſy either to praiſe or blame him, without "deviating from the truth."

Ammianus Marcellinus, a zealous Pagan, and an officer of diſtinction in the Roman army, deſcribes Julian as a hero, yet does not diſſemble his faults. M. de Voltaire enlarges upon the panegyric of Marcellinus, but ſuppreſſes the latter. "This Emperor," ſays he, "who is deſcribed as a deteſtable perſonage "by our hiſtorians, was perhaps the firſt, or "the ſecond great man which this world pro-"duced. Always ſober, temperate, chaſte; "ſleeping little, dividing his time between "the affairs of ſtate and ſtudy; friendly, and "generous; the avowed enemy of all pomp "and parade, &c. Had he been a private "perſon, he would have attracted univerſal "admiration." This is the bright ſide of the profile.

Let us now take a view of the other ſide.

Julian was born and educated a chriſtian, as has been obſerved, which he abjured, and gave into the rankeſt ſuperſtitions, which the Pagans themſelves have ſeverely cenſured.

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He was conſtantly attended by magicians and aſtrologers, and was "more ſuperſtitious than "religious," as his panegyriſt, A. Marcellinus confeſſes. It it from this ſaid A. Marcellinus that all the features of Julian's character are here deduced. It was ſaid of him, that "if he re-"turned victorious from the Parthian war, there "would not be beaſts ſufficient for ſacrifice to "ſatisfy his ſuperſtition." This philoſophic Emperor would "frequently walk in proceſ-"ſion ſurrounded by women with children at "their breaſts," (an uſual ſuperſtitious ceremony in thoſe days) "and attended by a mul-"titude of people, carrying the idols and in-"ſtruments for ſacrifice." (Lib. xxii.) The generous diſpoſition of his character, which M. de Voltaire ſo much extols, is not eaſily to be reconciled with that duplicity, with which he conducted himſelf towards his uncle Conſtantius; nor with his obſtinacy in retaining the title of Auguſtus, which Conſtantius would not confer upon him. Conſtantine the great, as has been obſerved, ſhewed much more moderation and deference to Maximian Galerus, who would only permit him to take the title of Ceſar, although he had been ſaluted Emperor by the army. Conſtantine acquieſed, rather than excite a civil war. But the *mode-*

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rate, and generous Julian, as M. de Voltaire calls him, choſe rather to wage war with his uncle, than yield to his remonſtrances. This ſame philoſophic Emperor, according to * Theodoret, ſacrificed a woman in the temple of the moon at Carræ. M. de Voltaire is indignant at this ſtory, ſo prejudicial to the character of his hero, and ſays that Theodoret is the only perſon who mentions it. To this it is anſwered that Theodoret living in the neighbourhood of Carræ, was the more likely to be informed of the truth of it. He was likewiſe nearly a contemporary with the fact, and his veracity as yet has never been impeached. A. Marcellinus, it is true, makes no expreſs mention of it, becauſe he ſuppreſſes, as he himſelf declares, (Lib. xx.) certain facts which might tarniſh the character of his hero. However he ſpeaks ſufficiently clear upon that occaſion, to render Theodoret's relation very probable. From Marcellinus we collect that Julian performed a ſacrifice at Carræ, in a very ſecret manner in the preſence of Procopius alone, whom he ordered to aſſume the purple as ſoon as he ſhould hear

* He was biſhop of Cyr in Syria, in the fourth century, and was one of the moſt learned fathers of the church.

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of his death. (Lib. xxiii.) "Although Em-
"peror," adds M. de Voltaire, "we find that
"he refuſed to take the pompous title of
"*Dominus*, which Conſtantine affected." We read however in A. Marcellinus, that "he
"was greedy of popular applauſe, even of the
"loweſt kind." (Lib. xxv.) "A fooliſh ſtory
"is related," continues the ſaid M. de Voltaire, "that when Julian undertook to re-
"build the temple of Jeruſalem, globes of fire
"burſt forth from the earth, and conſumed
"both the works and the workmen." We know that Jeſus Chriſt and the prophets foretold the deſtruction of the temple, and that it ſhould never be rebuilt. Julian flattered himſelf that he could defeat the prophecy, and by that means overthrow the authenticity of the ſcriptures. He collected therefore a multitude of Jews, and flattered their obſtinate and obdurate hearts with the hopes of ſucceſs, furniſhing immenſe ſums of money for the undertaking. The iſſue of this buſineſs is related by A. Marcellinus. "Alipius," ſays he, "hurried on the works with un-
"remitting diligence. He was moreover
"aſſiſted by the governor of the province.
"But all his exertions, all his pains were of
"no avail, as globes of fire burſt forth from

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"the foundations, and consumed several of the "workmen; this dreadful element driving "away to a distance all those who offered to "approach. Wherefore the project was "abandoned." (lib. xxiii.) These are the words of that pagan author; and the fact is so well attested on all hands that no one relation of antiquity has been more universally credited.

The artifice and duplicity, with which Julian conducted himself, to conceal the inclination he had for idolatry, and his zeal for the re-establishment of it, does not pass unnoticed by A. Marcellinus. "To succeed "more successfully," he says, "Julian assem-"bled those bishops and the people in his pa-"lace who he knew were most divided in "their religious opinions. He exhorted them "to live in peace, but at the same time to be "fixed and determined in their sentiments. "This he did with the view of increasing their "divisions, having observed, as he said, that "*wild beasts are not more ferocious to each other,* "*than the Christians, when they are divided in* "*religious opinions.*" (Lib. xxii.) Julian's duplicity and malice is here laid open by A. Marcellinus. How incorrect then has M. de Voltaire translated this passage, when he says

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that Marcellinus relates that it was Julian's obſervation that *the Chriſtians in his time tore one another to pieces like wild beaſts!* The words of Marcellinus are; "Utque diſpoſitorum ro-
"boraret effectum, diffidentes Chriſtianos
"Antiſtites cum plebe diſciſsâ in palatium
"intromiſſos monebat ut civilibus diſcordiis
"conſopitis, quiſque nullo vetente religioni
"ſuæ ſerviret intrepidus: quod agebat ideo
"obſtinate, ut diſſentiones augente licentia,
"non timeret unanimitatem poſtea plebem,
"nullas infeſtas hominibus beſtiis ut ſunt ſibi
"feralibus plerisque chriſtianorum exper-
"tus."

M. de Voltaire not only apologizes in a certain degree for the apoſtacy of Julian, but he even endeavours to juſtify it. In ſupport of his hypotheſis he adduces the crimes of Conſtantine, which, he ſays, Julian muſt have beheld with horror and deteſtation, and conſequently prejudice him againſt the chriſtian religion. But if he was to judge of things by men, how much more rational in him would it have been to conceive a horror of paganiſm, which had produced ſo many emperors who were more like beaſts than men? Conſtantine had undoubtedly his faults. They have been ſtated. But what were they,

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when compared to the ferocity of Caligula, Domitian, Maximin, Decius; with the infamous debaucheries of Nero, Heliogabalus and Caracalla? The flagrant crimes of the Pagans ought to have made a greater impreſſion on the mind of Julian, than the few defects and blemiſhes in the character of Conſtantine; which, as has been obſerved, aroſe chiefly from his domeſtic misfortunes.

Another argument which the French philoſopher makes uſe of to palliate Julian's apoſtacy he borrows from * Suidas, which he dreſſes up as uſual after his own faſhion. It proceeded, ſays he, from the haughty deportment and the ſpiritual pride of the biſhops. "A biſhop of Tripoli ſent word to the Em-"preſs that he ſhould not viſit her unleſs ſhe "received him in a manner ſuitable to his "dignity. He expected that ſhe ſhould meet "him at the door of her apartment, and re-"ceive his benediction in an humble and re-"ſpectful poſture. Nor was ſhe to be ſeated, "till he had granted her the permiſſion ſo to "do. The Pagan Pontiffs did not behave "themſelves thus arrogantly to their ſove-"reigns. Such a proud deportment muſt have

* A Greek hiſtorian of the 11th century.

"made a forcible impreſſion on the mind "of Julian, who was preſent." So far M. de Voltaire. Suidas however relates the ſtory nearly after the following manner. "Several biſhops," ſays he, "having aſſem- "bled for the purpoſe of holding a council, "they went by turns to pay their reſpects to "the Empreſs Euſebia, who received them in "a very haughty and diſdainful manner. "Leontius, an African biſhop, a man whoſe "character was not of the beſt, being inform- "ed of the rude reception the Empreſs had "given to his brethren, refuſed to wait upon "her." He then made a part of the ſpeech above-mentioned. "At which the Empreſs "being offended, ſhe made her complaints to "the Emperor, who told her in a very laconic "manner to go and ſpin with the maids in "the palace." From this conciſe relation it may be concluded that this haughty beha- viour was peculiar to Leontius alone, ſince no other prelate was accuſed of it. Where- fore the decent deportment of the other bi- ſhops ought to have impreſſed on the mind of Julian a more favorable opinion of the true ſpirit of chriſtianity, than the ſupercilious behaviour of one man. Another reaſon, which M. de Voltaire aſſigns for the apoſtacy

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of Julian, he aſcribes to his education. "He "was educated," ſays he, "by philoſophers, who "rivetted in his heart that averſion for chriſ- "tianity, which the abuſes of its membets "muſt have inſpired him with." This evidently proves how dangerous a philoſophic education is to youth. Young men are taught to remark the real or pretended abuſes of religion, but not the advantages which ſociety derives from the benevolent leſſons it inculcates. M. de Voltaire however forgot himſelf when he aſſigns this as a reaſon for Julian's apoſtaſy. He was not educated by thoſe he calls philoſophers. Euſebius biſhop of Nicomedia, as has been remarked, was one of his firſt maſters, and he confeſſes himſelf that he was a chriſtian till he attained the age of twenty years. Had Julian been really a philoſopher, he might eaſily have diſtinguiſhed between the rational ſyſtem of chriſtianity, and the extravagance of paganiſm. He might have diſcriminated the advantages from the abuſes which every inſtitution is liable to. Laſtly, M. de Voltaire affirms that Julian muſt have had a great predilection for the pacific ſpirit of the pagan religion, which in no reſpect fettered the mind with articles of faith, or preſcribed any poſitive act of religion.

gion. Here he ſpeaks out; and thus juſtifies the remark made at the beginning of this little eſſay. They are the precepts of the chriſtian code which alienate the minds of proud philoſophers, becauſe they do not ſquare with that un-reſtrained and licentious liberty they ſo eagerly wiſh to enjoy.

To return to our ſubject after this long digreſſion. It may be obſerved that the leſſons of the goſpel, by the teſtimonies of its greateſt enemies, wrought a moſt ſurpriſing revolution in the morals and manners of mankind. They eradicated the moſt deteſtable vices, and gave birth to the moſt eminent virtues. Such an aſtoniſhing change from vice to virtue could be the work of God alone. St. Paul, in his 1ſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians expreſsly declares that the chriſtian religion was to be founded on the deſtruction of the human paſſions. Whence it could not fail to draw down a heavy perſecution on thoſe who adopted it. It is what the divine Legiſlator himſelf foretold they ſhould ſuffer for his ſake.

Yet as the chriſtian religion maintains no principles derogatory to the rights of ſovereigns, or to ſociety, and as the Romans did

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not * always moleſt people on account of their religious principles, it is rather ſurpri-

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* Becauſe they did not *always* moleſt people for their religious principles, it does not follow that they allowed an *univerſal toleration*, as M. de Voltaire, and after him the author of the Decline and Fall, &c. (p. 451.) has aſſerted. On the contrary, we find the Roman laws very ſevere in that reſpect. "Strange gods ſhall not be wor-"ſhipped." (12 Tables.) Does a tolerating government expreſs itſelf thus? In tracing the hiſtory of this people we find the ſame prohibition renewed in the year of the city 325, (ſee Livy, lib. 9. No. 30.) and the Ediles charged to ſee them duly obſerved. Theſe prohibitions were iſſued again in the year 529, (Lib. 25. No. 5.); the Ediles ſeverely rebuked for having neglected theſe orders, and other magiſtrates appointed to ſee that the laws were better executed. We find the worſhip of Serapis and Iſis, which had ſecretly crept into the capital, forbidden, and their chapels demoliſhed by the Conſuls in the year 336, (Valerius Maximus, lib. 4.) many decrees of Pontiffs, and of the Senate againſt new modes of worſhip in 566, (Livy, lib. 39. No. 16.) and the worſhip of Jupiter Sabaſius proſcribed in 633. With regard to this worſhip, the wiſe Rollin obſerves that in every period inſtances may be found of the attention of the Romans to keep off every ſort of ſuperſtition. Yet M. de Voltaire, and thoſe who copy after him, aſſert cooly and without exception, that the Romans *adopted the maxims of univerſal toleration*. This intolerant ſpirit however was not confined to the ancient republic, but prevailed equally under the emperors; witneſs the counſels of Mecenas to Auguſtus againſt all ſuch as ſhould introduce, or

honor

ſing that they ſhould have perſecuted the chriſtians with ſuch inflexible cruelty; for it was not till after they had ſpilt torrents of blood without effect, for nearly the ſpace of three hundred years, that they granted peace to the chriſtian name.

To treat this ſubject in a proper manner, it will be expedient, 1ſt, To lay open the true cauſe of theſe perſecutions; and 2dly, To ſhow to what exceſs of cruelty they were car-

honor in Rome, other Gods than thoſe of the empire. "Honor the Gods," ſays he, "with care, according to "the cuſtoms of your anceſtors, and *compel* others to ho- "nor them. *Hate* thoſe who innovate in religion, and "*puniſh* them, not only on account of the Gods, for he "that deſpiſes them has no reſpect for any thing, but "becauſe they who introduce new Gods, prevail on ma- "ny perſons to follow ſtrange laws, and that from thence "ariſe aſſociations by oath, cabals, parties, all things "dangerous in a ſtate. Suffer no atheiſts, or magici- "ans." (Dion Caſſius, lib. 42.) Witneſs the Egyptian "ſuperſtitions proſcribed under this emperor, (ibid. "lib. 54.) and under Tiberius; the Jews alſo baniſhed, "if they would not renounce their religion. (Tacit. Annal. lib. 2. No. 85.) But witneſs above all the Chriſtians driven into exile, ſtripped of their property, and given up for a long time, and in ſuch great numbers, to the moſt cruel torments, *not for their crimes*, but their religion. (See Pliny's Letter to the Emp. Trajan, Tacitus's account of the fire of Rome, Suetonius and others.)

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ried. From whence we may judge that there never was a cauſe more innocent, more juſt, or more holy than that which the chriſtians ſuffered for; and that it was Almighty God alone who could inſpire them with ſuch invincible courage, ſuch unwearied conſtancy, as naturally was above all human ſtrength whatever.

Religion was the *ſole crime* of the Chriſtians. We have proved it. The only cauſe of their ſufferings was the courageous and perſevering conſtancy they exhibited in refuſing to adore the Gods of the empire. The edicts of the emperors, and the ſentences of condemnation pronounced againſt the martyrs, afford the moſt poſitive evidence. We need only produce a few of them to aſcertain the fact.

From * Euſebius of Cæſaria we learn that "the emperors Diocleſian and Maximian were "reſolved

* He was a Grecian biſhop, and a learned church hiſtorian of the 4th century, According to the modern commodious faſhion of writing, we may either admit or reject his authority. In page 458, note 22, of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, we read that "the "learned Euſebius may be more ſafely relied upon than "the vehement Tertullian." And in page 583 we are told, that no reliance whatever can be made upon what

" reſolved to bring back into the right way
" thoſe who had deſerted it, and to force them to

he ſays; for the author deſcribes him as " a courtly " biſhop, a writer who has violated one of the funda- " mental laws of hiſtory ... an ambiguous equivocator." (Note 181. p. 87.) Thus has his predeceſſor Voltaire treated Herodotus. In his Philoſophical Dictionary he calls him " a ſtory-teller, fit only to amuſe children." But this is only, like the foregoing author, when he makes againſt himſelf, for on other occaſions, when it ſuits his conveniency, he extols his authority to the ſkies. (See Art. Circumciſion.) We may alſo admit, or reject the teſtimony of Lactantius in the ſame manner. We read in the Decline and Fall, &c. p. 392. note 107. that " Lactantius may ſometimes be admitted as an evidence " of public facts, though very ſeldom of private anec- " dotes." And in page 401 we are told " if it were " *poſſible* to rely on the partial teſtimony of an injudi- " cious writer," viz. Lactantius. In page 583 the author of the Decline and Fall, &c. aſks what reliance we can have " on the graveſt of the eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, " when Euſebius himſelf very frankly confeſſes that he " has related whatever might redound to the glory, and " that he has ſuppreſſed all that could tend to the diſ- " grace of religion?" The ſame it may be anſwered as he gives, and as his maſter Voltaire gave before him to the life of Julian written by Ammianus Marcellinus, who expreſsly declares that he has " ſuppreſſed certain " facts derogatory to the character of his hero." That author poſitively ſays, ſpeaking of theſe letters (to which he applies the epithets *objurgatorias & mordaces*) which Julian

"to worſhip the Gods of the empire. But "that the Chriſtians expoſed themſelves by "their obſtinacy and perverſeneſs to the pe- "nalties denounced againſt them, as neither "the equity of the imperial mandates, or the "fear of puniſhment could withdraw them "from their purpoſe." (Epiſtola Sabini in Hiſt. Eccleſ. Euſebii, cap. 1. lib. ix. p. 284.)

Euſebius moreover gives us alſo in his Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory (lib. 8.) part of an edict of the Emperor Maximin, which runs as follows.

"Our predeceſſors, Diocleſian and Maxi- "mian, perceiving that ſuch numbers became "Chriſtians, proclaimed, and with good rea- "ſon, that thoſe who had forſaken the reli- "gion of their country ſhould be compelled "to return to it." By a ſubſequent edict it was ordained that the "Chriſtians ſhould be

Julian wrote to Conſtantius, "quere ſeriem nec ſcrutari "licuit, nec ſi licuiſſet proferre decebat in publicum." (Lib. xx.) It would have redounded equally to the credit of ſome modern philoſophers if they had adopted the ſame wiſe precautions. We ſhould then have ſeen leſs obſcenity in the works of M. de Voltaire, and not have been offended by the idle and indecent note concerning Proculus and his hundred Sarmatian virgins, beſides ſeveral ſuch like anecdotes in the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

"deprived of their dignities, condemned to "the torture, and excluded from the benefit of "the law." (*Lactantius de Mort. Perſecut. p. 862.) Fifty years before this period "the "Emperor Valerian commanded that all the "biſhops and prieſts ſhould be put to death; "that the ſenators, the Roman knights and "men of quality ſhould be deprived of their "eſtates and honors; and if, after this, they "perſiſted to practiſe the chriſtian religion, "they ſhould be put to death alſo." (†Cypriani

* He was born about the beginning of the 4th century, and was the diſciple of Arnobius. Conſtantine made him preceptor to his eldeſt ſon Criſpus in conſequence of the great reputation he had acquired for his virtue and learning. He taught rhetoric publicly, and with great applauſe both in Africa and at Nicomedia. Of all the eccleſiaſtical writers in the Latin language, he is looked upon as the moſt eloquent. Hence he has been ſirnamed *Tullius Chriſtianus*, or the chriſtian Cicero.

† Cyprian was a native of Carthage, and a ſon of one of the richeſt families of that city. There he taught rhetoric with great applauſe before he became a chriſtian. After his converſion he took the name of Cecilius out of gratitude to the prieſt who had converted him. After the death of Donatus biſhop of Carthage, he was elected to that ſee in the year 248, but was obliged to leave the city about two years afterwards on account of the perſecution of Decius. From the place of his retreat he wrote ſeveral pious and inſtructive letters to his people and

priani Epiſt. 80. p. 237.) This edict ſpecifies every kind of puniſhment which was to be inflicted on the Chriſtians.

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and clergy. On his return to Carthage, he held ſeveral councils to regulate the penance which thoſe who had fallen in the perſecution were to undergo, and on ſeveral other points of diſcipline. In the year 257 he was baniſhed from Carthage during the perſecution of Valerian; but eleven months afterwards was permitted to reſide in his gardens near that city. He was however ſoon after arreſted, and taken before the Proconſul; when generouſly profeſſing himſelf a chriſtian he was condemned to be beheaded. Such a character as Cyprian's was ſure never to eſcape the cenſure of modern philoſophy. With a partiality peculiar to itſelf his faults have been enlarged upon (for who is exempt from them?) and his virtues ſuppreſſed. To notice them all would greatly exceed the bounds of a note. One wilful miſrepreſentation will be ſufficient, if not to invalidate every thing, at leaſt will make the reader cautious of what he admits. M. de Voltaire, deſcanting upon the article *baptiſm*, ſays that "the queſtion was put to St. Cyprian if thoſe were "really baptized whoſe bodies had only been ſprinkled "with water. His anſwer was, that it was the opinion "of many churches that they were not chriſtians; but "for his part he thought they were, although they had "received *a much leſs meaſure of grace* than thoſe who had "been dipped thrice in the water, according to cuſtom." For this M. de Voltaire quotes Cyprian's 67th Letter. In Biſhop Fell's edition of Cyprian we find the paſſage alluded to in his 69th Letter, p. 185; but his deciſion on the

By an edict of the Emperor Galerus in 305, it was ordained that the Christians should be made to suffer every mode of torture, and afterwards be burnt at slow fires. (Lactantius, p. 874.) The famous letter of Pliny to Trajan, and that emperor's answer, prove to us that the Christians were persecuted *solely* for their attachment to their religion. "Must "the Christians," says Pliny, "be punished "for the *name*," (observe that) "although "otherwise innocent? or is the *name* itself so "flagitious as to be punishable?—I tried to "gain the truth even by torture from two "women, who were said to officiate at their "worship; but I could discover only an ob-"stinate kind of superstition carried to great "excess." (Pliny translated by the Earl of Orrery, vol. 2. p. 427.) Trajan returned for answer: "The Christians need not be sought "after: If they are brought into your pre-"sence and convicted, they must be punish-

the subject is quite the reverse to that stated by the French poet: for amongst many other reasons he gives in contradiction to what M. de Voltaire advances, he positively says that *the gifts of God cannot be divided.* To suppose them therefore to have received *less grace, is an error.* These are the express words Cyprian makes use of.

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"ed." (Ibid. p. 428.) Such was the anſwer of the mild Trajan; mild indeed, if compared to the generality of the Roman emperors! But is it not the height of injuſtice to puniſh people for no other crime than that of adhering to the dictates of their conſciences, when in other reſpects they are quiet and peaceable ſubjects? We ſee that they were accuſed of no other crime whatever but a firm adherence to their religion.

Dion Caſſius, and other pagan authors, give us a circumſtantial detail of their ſufferings under Domitian; and from Tacitus and Suetonius we learn the barbarous and cruel treatment they experienced under the Emperor * Nero. Thus it appears beyond a

* Here again we may take our choice. Either to ſuppoſe Nero to have been a monſter of cruelty and wickedneſs with all the world, both ancient and modern, or a man of a humane and benevolent diſpoſition: for we read both theſe aſſertions in the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. In page 81 he is called the *profligate* and *cruel* Nero; and in page 533 he is complimented with the epithets of the *prudent* and *humane* Nero. Theſe certainly are contradictions. What matter? Although they may be diſagreeable to ſome readers, yet they are very uſeful to ſome writers. They reap this advantage at leaſt from them, that they muſt neceſſarily be in the right, either when they deny, or when they affirm.

doubt,

doubt, that the profeſſion of that religion conſtituted the ſole crime of the Chriſtians.

In the firſt ages of chriſtianity every member profeſſing that religion might look upon himſelf as a victim devoted one day to ſeal his faith with his blood, and to expire in torments. The dreadful examples which the Chriſtians daily had before their eyes exhibited a lively, though melancholy picture of what they had to expect. The Emperor Nero, whoſe very name excites horror and deteſtation, in ſpite of the advocates he has found in later times, was the firſt who embrued his hands in chriſtian blood. It is in the following manner the hiſtorian Tacitus deſcribes the horrible torments which he cauſed them to ſuffer. He ſays that "Nero "to ſuppreſs the prevailing rumour of his "having ſet fire to Rome, transferred the "guilt upon fictitious criminals, and ſubjected "to the moſt exquiſite tortures, and doomed "to executions ſingularly cruel thoſe people, "who under the vulgar appellation of Chriſ-"tians were hated for their very name. The "founder of this ſect was Chriſt, who in the "reign of the Emperor Tiberius had ſuffered "death by the ſentence of the Procurator "Pontius Pilate.—By the declaration of thoſe

who

" were firſt ſeized, and had confeſſed them-
" ſelves Chriſtians, they diſcovered a great
" number of others.—They died in torments,
" and their torments were imbittered by in-
" ſult and deriſion. Some were nailed to
" croſſes; other ſewn up in ſkins of wild
" beaſts, and expoſed to the fury of dogs:
" others again, ſmeered over with combuſti-
" ble materials, were uſed as torches to
" illuminate the night. Hence it proceeded
" that towards the miſerable ſufferers, how-
" ever guilty, and juſtly deſerving the moſt
" exemplary death." (For why? For their very name, and for no other crime.) "Po-
" pular commiſeration aroſe, as for people
" who with no view to the utility of the ſtate,
" but only to gratify the bloody ſpirit of one
" man, were doomed to periſh." (Annals tranſlat. by Gordon, vol. 2. p. 199.) Yet, as Tacitus further informs us, " nothing could
" acquit Nero of the charge, which was uni-
" verſally believed that by him the confla-
" gration was authoriſed." (Ibid.) Let modern ſceptics reflect on theſe lines of Tacitus. Will they then preſume to ſay that the cruelties committed on the Chriſtians are the effect of religious exaggeration? The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman

Empire endeavours to extenuate this paſſage of Tacitus, by inſinuating that the Chriſtians were legally condemned for crimes committed againſt the ſtate. With what ſucceſs he has performed the taſk, is left to the deciſion of the reader. The original words of Tacitus are, "igitur primo correpti qui *fatebantur*, "deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens," which he renders thus in Engliſh. "The "confeſſion of thoſe who were ſeized, diſco- "vered a great number of their *accomplices.*" In what? Gordon the tranſlator of Tacitus ſaw no word of that import, nor does the ſenſe of the paſſage warrant it. "By the declara- "tion of thoſe who were firſt ſeized," ſays Gordon, "and had *confeſſed themſelves Chriſ-* "*tians*, they diſcovered a great number of o- "thers." Again, Tacitus ſays, "miſeratio "oriebatur, tanquam non *utilitate publicâ*, ſed "in ſævitiam unius abſumerentur," which the author of the Decline and Fall, &c. tranſlates as follows. "Thoſe wretches were ſacrificed "not ſo much to the rigour of *juſtice* as to "the cruelty of a jealous tyrant." (P. 534.) Gordon however differs with him again in his tranſlation, when he ſays "popular commiſe- "ration aroſe as for people who with no other "view *to the utility of the ſtate*, but only to gra- "tify

"tify the bloody ſpirit of one man were "doomed to periſh." Is there a word, either in the original Latin, or in the tranſlation by Gordon, which implies the word *juſtice*? Such, it may be obſerved, is the accuracy of modern philoſophical tranſlations, and ſuch is the novel mode of inſtructing the riſing generation!

When we reflect on the general diſpoſition of the human heart, which is ſo frequently warped with prejudice and paſſion, we ſhall not be ſurpriſed at the harſh epithets which Tacitus makes uſe of when he ſpeaks of the Chriſtians. He was a Pagan, and as ſuch muſt have conceived the greateſt prejudices againſt them. But the immediate purpoſe of the preſent inquiry is to aſcertain the veracity of the fact. The character of the author who has tranſmitted it to poſterity precludes every doubt that can be formed on the ſubject. He was a man of merit in every point of view, and therefore could never betray the truth. It was by his merit that he obtained the firſt offices in the ſtate. Veſpaſian and Titus conferred upon him the moſt important charges. He was made Prætor under Domitian, and Conſul two years afterwards in the place of Virginius Rufus in the 97th year of

the chriſtian æra. Pliny, the younger, who was his friend, with all the learned men of thoſe days, ſpeak of Tacitus and of his writings in the higheſt ſtrain of panegyric. Such a character as this could never tranſmit a fact of ſuch importance to poſterity, without being well aſſured of its authenticity. It happened during his life time; and it was of ſuch notoriety, that he muſt have had it from numbers who were eye-witneſſes to the fact. It is likewiſe confirmed, as we read in the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (p. 534.) by the *diligent* and *accurate* Suetonius, as the author ſtiles him; and here we might reſt our opinion, if we did not find in the preceding page, note 30, the ſaid Suetonius branded with the title of a *greedy tranſlator*. Thus ſome people build with one hand, and pull down with the other, juſt as circumſtances require!

The cruelties inflicted upon the chriſtians, by moſt the ſucceeding Emperors were not leſs inhuman, and barbarous. Whatever ſavage induſtry could invent to torture the human frame, was put in execution againſt them. The chriſtians, Tertullian informs us, were in deriſion called *Sarmentitii* and *ſemaxii*, that is people of twigs and ſtakes, as they were frequently impaled alive, or burnt at

ſlow

ſlow fires. (Apol. cap. 48, p. 39.) It is impoſſible to peruſe the account of their ſuffering without horror and diſmay. The letters from the churches of Lyons and Vienne to the churches of Aſia, (See Euſebius's Eccleſ. Hiſt. lib. 5. cap. 1, &c.) in which mention is made of the torments inflicted upon the chriſtians, are a ſtanding monument of the ſavage cruelty of the Pagans on one hand, and of the invincible courage of the martyrs on the other. Men, women and children were arraigned without diſtinction of age, ſex, or condition; and that for the *ſole* crime of their religion. Let one inſtance among many ſuffice. A delicate young woman (Blandina by name) being tormented for ſeveral hours, to make her foreſwear her religion, was deaf to all the intreaties made to ſave her life. The only anſwer ſhe gave was, *I am a chriſtian; and we are guilty of no crime.* This anecdote reſts upon the authority of Dom. Ruinart in his Acta Martyrum. He was a learned Benedictine monk of the congregation of St. Maur, which was fruitful in men of erudition. He collected the genuine acts of the martyrs from ancient manuſcripts with great judgment and induſtry, which he publiſhed, and in the preface to the ſaid work, he

he compleatly confutes our countryman Mr. Dodwell, who like the modern critics, (though with a very different view) maintained that the number of the martyrs was inconſiderable. M. de Voltaire ſeems to have had a great opinion of Dom. Ruinart, though (as uſual) he betrays his own inconſiſtency, when he gives his character. He deſcribes him to have been a *zealous*, *diſcreet*, and *well informed* man. Yet, he adds, that *he might have choſen his ſubjects with more diſcretion.* (Dict. Phil.) Some people may be at a loſs how to reconcile theſe aſſertions. A *diſcreet*, *well-informed* man, we might naturally ſuppoſe, would not chuſe his ſubjects without *diſcretion* and *judgment.* If ſo, why did M. de Voltaire and his tranſcriber, the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, collect ſo many paſſages from Dom. Ruinart, if they thought that he wanted both *diſcretion* and *judgment* to ſelect them? But to return.

As it is aſtoniſhing that men ſhould be capable of ſuch barbarity towards their fellow-creatures, ſo we might naturally ſuppoſe, that the horrible details we have of their ſufferings to be the effect of exaggeration. In this caſe however it is not neceſſary to pin our faith upon thoſe who may be called parties in the

the buſineſs, for the Pagans themſelves give as poſitive evidence to the fact. No man can heſitate, after peruſing the narrative of Tacitus abovementioned, to believe that the Romans were capable of the moſt refined cruelty. Libanius, a Pagan, and the panegyriſt of Julian the apoſtate, in the funeral oration which he delivered in honor of that prince, gives an account of the various torments which the chriſtians were made to ſuffer; and, to uſe his own words, he ſays, that "rivers of their blood was ſpilt." They feared, ſays he, that their new maſter, Julian, would prove more cruel to them than the preceding Emperors, *who had made them ſuffer the moſt excruciating torments*, Such is the import of his words, (Liban. in Julian. apud Fabrit. Bib. Græc. t. 7. p. 283). Thus we ſee that there cannot be the leaſt rational doubt formed, of the horrible cruelties inflicted upon the chriſtians *.

Notwithſtanding theſe inhuman butcheries the chriſtian religion gained ground, and

* Were there no monuments exiſting of the cruelties inflicted on the chriſtians in the firſt, ſecond, or third age, we are fully informed of them by Libanius, who poſitively declares, that they had experienced from the preceding Emperors what they feared from Julian.

ſpread

ſpread itſelf with amazing rapidity. The blood of the martyrs, according to the energetic expreſſion of Tertullian, was like a fruitful ſeed which produced chriſtians by thouſands. The more they ſtrove to extirpate them, the more they multiplied: the more they ſought to cruſh them, the more they flouriſhed. They cut off the people by thouſands; they depopulated whole towns, yet they could not extirpate them *. Euſebius makes mention of a town in Aſia, which was entirely inhabited by chriſtians, and on that account was burnt to the ground, and all the people periſhed in the flames. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, has mentioned this fact as related by Euſebius. "In a ſmall town," ſays he, "of "whoſe name and ſituation we are left igno- "rant, it ſhould ſeem that the magiſtrates and "the body of the people had embraced the "chriſtian faith; and *as ſome reſiſtance might* "*be apprehended to the executiou of the edict*, the

* "We are ſlain," ſays Juſtin Martyr, "with the "ſword, but we increaſe and multiply. The more we "are perſecuted and deſtroyed, the more are added to "our numbers. As a vine, by being pruned and cut "cloſe, ſhoots forth new ſuckers, and bears a greater "abundance of fruit, ſo it is with us." (Apol. 2).

"governor

" governor of the province was ſupported by " a numerous detachment of Legionaries. " On their approach the citizens threw them- " ſelves into the church, *with a reſolution* " *either of defending with arms the ſacred edifice,* " *or of periſhing in its ruins. They indignantly* " *rejected the notice and permiſſion which was* " *given them to retire, till the ſoldiers, provoked* " *by their obſtinate refuſal,* ſet fire to the build- " ing on all ſides, and conſumed by this ex- " traordinary martyrdom a great number of " Phrygians with their wives and children." Had this period dropped from the pen of M. de Voltaire no body would be ſurpriſed, becauſe embelliſhments are allowed generally to all poets. But that the author in queſtion ſhould have made ſnch additions to the narrative of Euſebius, moſt people will not be able to reconcile to the fair and impartial taſk of an hiſtorian. He tells his readers in a note (160) that " the ancient Latin tranſlator of " Euſebius, Rufinus, adds the important cir- " cumſtance of the permiſſion given to the " inhabitants of retiring from thence." But who could ſuppoſe that the author would have had recourſe to tranſlations, when he was ſo capable of conſulting the originals, and when in fact he has declared that he has con-

ſulted *all the originals which could elucidate his ſubject.* He ought to have known moreover that Rufinus has been univerſally reprobated for the liberties he takes in his tranſlations. Let us therefore turn to the original, which relates the fact in a very conciſe manner.— "A certain town in Phrygia," ſays Euſebius, "was beſet by an armed force, which ſet fire "to it, and conſumed the whole, with men, "women and children, who were then offer- "ing their prayers to God. And for this "reaſon, becauſe the inhabitants of every "denomination were chriſtians, and refuſed "to ſacrifice to the gods when called upon." (Book and chap. referred to by the author). Lactantius, ſpeaking of the injuſtice of the Pagan judges and magiſtrates, ſays that "one "of them cauſed a whole town, with all its "inhabitants and the church to be burnt." We find in neither of theſe accounts the words of the author, which are marked in Italics. They are indiſputably his own property, and in conſequence an impoſition upon the uninformed reader.

Euſebius cites likewiſe a letter of Maximin's to the magiſtrates of Tyre, wherein he congratulates them for having driven the chriſtians from their walls and country. (lib. 9. cap.

9. cap. xi. p. 249.) But to what purpoſe all this barbarity? To what effect this obſtinate rage, this unrelenting fury? So far from ſuppreſſing the chriſtian religion, half the world becomes members of it before the deaths of the tyrants themſelves; in ſpite of their power, and in ſpite of the torrents of blood, which their ſavage barbarity cauſed them to ſhed.

A real philoſopher; the man who is acquainted with the feelings and diſpoſition of the human heart, can never attribute ſuch aſtoniſhing and undaunted courage, ſuch unremitting perſeverance to prejudice, bigotry or infatuation. Three centuries of torments of various kinds ſuffered voluntarily, patiently and courageouſly! The natural ſtrength and diſpoſition of men goes not thus far. We muſt therefore look for ſome other cauſe. This neceſſarily leads us to acknowledge the interpoſition of a ſupernatural power. The Pagans, unable to account for the intrepidity and perſevering courage of the martyrs, deemed it a *perverſe* and *inveterate* obſtinacy. Such was the opinion of Pliny, as has been ſhown, of Suetonius and others. "I could diſcover "only" ſays the former, "an obſtinate kind "of ſuperſtition carried to great exceſs."

The incredulous, to invalidate theſe facts, take another method to deprive the chriſtian religion of this ſtriking proof of its divinity. "If the chriſtian religion," ſay they, "have "had its martyrs, other religions have had "theirs. The former therefore can draw no "concluſions in their favor, but what will "equally apply to the latter." To prove the fallacy of this mode of reaſoning, we need only compare the martyrs of chriſtianity with the pretended martyrs of other religions, for their virtues, numbers, quality, perſeverance, and excluſively for the motives which animated their courage. As to their virtues the teſtimony of Pliny has already been adduced. Julian the apoſtate, and many other Pagans have likewiſe acknowledged that innocence of behaviour, the love of juſtice, patience, temperance, and every moral virtue characterized the adorers of Jeſus Chriſt. "You cannot "be a chriſtian," ſaid the judge Gaius to Afra, (who before her converſion had led a diſſolute life) "for the chriſtians never admit "ſuch into their ſociety." (Ruinart. p. 50.) "You lately ſaw," ſaid Tertullian, "when "you commanded a chriſtian to be conducted "to a houſe of ill fame, that we have a greater "terror of thoſe crimes than of the moſt

"cruel

"cruel torments." (Apol. cap. ult. p. 40.) It may not be improper here to obſerve, that the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire in all his extenſive reading, (for the fact is mentioned likewiſe by Euſebius, as well as by Tertullian whom he ſo often quotes) ſhould never have met with it. He looks upon ſuch ſtories as a fiction of "the monks in ſucceeding ages, who in their "peaceful ſolitudes entertained themſelves "with diverſifying the deaths and ſufferings "of the primitive martyrs. They frequently "invented torments of a much more refined "and ingenious nature. In particular it has "pleaſed them to ſuppoſe that the zeal of the "Roman magiſtrates, diſdaining every conſi-"deration of moral virtue or public decency, "endeavoured to ſeduce thoſe whom they were "unable to vanquiſh, and that by their orders "the moſt brutal violence was offered to thoſe "whom they found it impoſſible to ſeduce. "Indeed we ſhould not neglect to remark that "the moſt ancient, as well as the moſt authen-"tic memorials of the church are ſeldom pol-"luted with theſe extravagant and indecent "fictions." (p. 554.) Tertullian reproached them however, and ſo did Euſebius, as has been obſerved, with this refined cruelty.

Surely

Surely they were ancient hiſtorians? The former lived in the ſecond century, and died about the year 216 of the chriſtian æra. Euſebius lived in the third century, and died in 338. They were both contemporary with the facts they relate, and therefore were prior to *the monks of ſucceeding ages in their peaceful ſolitudes*, as deſcribed by the author. The ſaid author, ſpeaking of the apologies which Tertullian and others preſented to the Roman Senate in behalf of their ſect, ſays (p. 517.) "that "it is doubtful whether any of the Pa-"gan philoſophers peruſed the apologies "which the primitive chriſtians repeatedly "publiſhed in behalf of themſelves and of "their religion; but it is much to be lamented "that ſuch a cauſe was not defended by abler "advocates." Surely the author overlooked this period when he aſſerts a few pages afterwards (vir. 528.) that "the peruſal of the "ancient apologies was ſufficient to remove "even the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion from the mind "of a candid adverſary." Though theſe two aſſertions do not *entirely* agree, yet the latter is perfectly conformable to the general opinion of the learned. Quadratus was a diſciple of the apoſtles, and biſhop of Athens in the year 126. He preſented an apology in favor

favor of the chriſtians in 131, upon which the Emperor Adrian put a ſtop to the perſecution. There are only a few fragments of this apology extant. During the perſecution of Severus, Tertullian publiſhed the apology abovementioned, which has always been deemed a maſter-piece of eloquence and learning. Juſtin Martyr, preſented two apologies in favor of the chriſtians; the firſt addreſſed to the Emperor Antoninus, the ſucceſſor of Adrian; the other to Marcus Aurelius againſt Creſcentius who had calumniated them. It is ſaid of Juſtin that he was an ornament to the chriſtian religion by his learning, his virtues and the purity of his doctrines.

The number of chriſtians who voluntarily ſhed their blood rather than depart from their faith muſt be a matter of aſtoniſhment to every reflecting mind. It has been ſhown what Libanius has recorded of thoſe dreadful butcheries. The horrid executions have alſo been deſcribed which took place at Lyons under Marcus Aurelius. We have ſeen likewiſe the edicts of Valerian, which denounced death againſt all the chriſtians without diſtinction of age, ſex or condition. It has been ſtated, that during the reigns of Diocleſian and Maximian, and that of Galerus

and

and Maximin, the chriſtians were ſacrificed by thouſands, inſomuch that this period of time has ever ſince been denominated the *æra of the martyrs.* It is needleſs therefore to recapitulate the perſecutions of Nero, Domitian, Decius and others, who were more or leſs profeſſed enemies to the chriſtian name.

To diſcredit however the idea that ſuch numbers of chriſtians were ſacrificed for their faith, although ſupported by incontrovertible documents, Mr. Dodwell, and after him M. de Voltaire, and his tranſcriber the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire have brought forward a fragment from Origen. "Origene," ſays M. de Voltaire, "dans ſon "livre troiſieme contre Celſe dit: on peut "facilement compter les chrêtiens qui ſon "mort pour la religion, parcequ'il en eſt "mort peu, et ſeulement des tems en tems, "et par intervalle." The tranſcriber affirms that "the learned Origen, who from his ex-"perience, as well as reading, was intimately "acquainted with the hiſtory of the chriſtians, "declares in the moſt expreſs terms that the "number of martyrs was very inconſiderable." They both ſupport their argument from the following lines of Origen. "Pauci per inter-"valla temporum, et facile numerabiles pro "religione

"religione chriſtiana ſunt mortui." They omit however the remainder of the ſentence, which fully explains the meaning of Origen. "Deo vetante ne in totum excinderetur hoc "genus hominum." "God not permit-"ting that the whole race of chriſtians ſhould "be cut off." It is proper to obſerve that Origen wrote againſt Celſus a whole year before the perſecution of Decius, and a long time before that of Diocleſian, both the one and the other more cruel and bloody than the preceding ones. Origen, in the above-mentioned paſſage, compares the number of thoſe who laid down their lives for their religion with thoſe whom Almighty God had preſerved. No doubt but the former were inferior to the latter, yet it does not prove that the number of martyrs was *very inconſiderable*, whatever it might have been at the moment he was ſpeaking of, otherwiſe his words *Deo vetante*, *God not permitting* (which the philoſophers have omitted) would be rank nonſenſe: for in that ſuppoſition there could be no fear of the "whole race of chriſtians being cut "off." It may not be improper in this place to give a few outlines of Origen's character. He has always been looked upon as one of the greateſt and moſt learned men of the pri-

mitive church. He was born at Alexandria in the year 185 of the chriſtian æra, and was ſirnamed *Adamant*, not only on account of his indefatigable application and induſtry in learning, but for his courageous reſolution under torments for the chriſtian faith. His father Leonidas had ſuffered death for the ſame cauſe during the perſecution of the emperor Severus in the year 202. Origen had in his ſchool a great number of diſciples, ſome who were chriſtians, and others pagans. He fortified the former in their faith and converted great numbers of the latter. So many of theſe laid down their lives for the cauſe that his ſchool was denominated the ſchool of martyrs. During the perſecution of Decius in 249 he was made to ſuffer the moſt cruel torments which he bore with a patience and fortitude beyond the appearance of human ſtrength. They were the more inſupportable, as they were made to laſt for a long ſpace of time, preventing with a cruel and un-relenting induſtry the death of the ſuffering victim. He did not however ſurvive this inhuman treatment long, for he died at Tyre in the year 254 at the age of 69, during the reign of the Emperors Gallus and Vouſial. Several excellent works he has left behind him, particularly

cularly that againſt Celſus, a paſſage out of which has been the ſubject of the aboveſaid diſcuſſion.

If we attend to the quality of thoſe who ſhed their blood for the faith of Chriſt we ſhall be ſtill more aſtoniſhed than at their numbers. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire particularly notices one. "Adauctus who was of a noble family in Italy, "and had raiſed himſelf through the ſucceſ- "ſive honors of the palace.—He is the more "remarkable for being the *only* perſon of rank "and condition who appears to have ſuffered "during the courſe of this general perſecu- "tion." (p. 577.) But ſurely the author for- got that he had previouſly mentioned in p. 564. "the principal eunuchs, Lucian and "Doritheus, Gorgonius, Andrew, who all at- "attended the perſon, poſſeſſed the favor, "and governed the houſhold of Diocleſian." They, as we learn both from Euſebius (Hiſt. eccleſ. lib. 8. cap. 6. p. 242.) and Lactantius (cap. 15, p. 863.) were all put to the moſt cruel death. Surely they were perſons of rank and diſtinction?

Among the martyrs we find learned men, and philoſophers of the firſt claſs; ſenators, and officers of ſuperior rank both in civil and

military capacities; relations likewiſe of the emperors themſelves, as Flavius Clemens of the family of Domitian; Marius, who, by his epitaph, is ſtiled *dux militum*; Sebaſtian, a captain of the guards under Diocleſian; Cantianus, who was of an ancient Conſular family; Marcellus, Hermias, officers in the legions; Andronicus, one of the firſt families in Epheſus, &c.

There are many obſervations to be made upon this period. Having ſtated that among the martyrs many learned men and *philoſophers* are to be found, we nevertheleſs ſee that the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire (p. 517.) expreſſing his ſurprize at "the inattention of the pagan and "philoſophic world to thoſe evidences which "were preſented by the hand of omnipotence, "not to their reaſon, but to their ſenſes." We find however that thoſe, whoſe hearts were not too ſtubborn to yield to conviction, were not inattentive to thoſe evidences. Was not Juſtin Martyr a philoſopher? Were not Arnobius, Athanagoras, and many others, who might be named, philoſophers? They certainly were not inattentive to theſe miraculous facts which they ſaw with their own eyes, for they embraced chriſtianity in conſequence of

of what they had ſeen. Are we to ſuppoſe that they renounced their pride, ſo dear to a philoſopher; that they gave up every comfort of life, and even life itſelf for a chimera; for a ſyſtem, deſtitute of every rational evidence? This would be a greater prodigy than any they ſaw with their own eyes.

Marcellus, a captain of Diocleſian's guards, as abovementioned, is another object of the cenſure of M. de Voltaire, and, after him, of the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. The former ſays, "Marcelle jetta par terre ſa ceinture et ſes armes, "diſant tout haut qu il etoit Chretien, et qu'il "ne voulut plus ſervir les Payens." (Exam. Imp. chap. 26. p. 144.) The latter expreſſes himſelf thus on the ſame ſubject. Marcellus was deſerving of death "for having thrown "away his belt, his arms and the enſigns of "his office, and for exclaiming with a loud "voice that he would obey none but Jeſus "Chriſt, the Eternal King, and that he re-"nounced for ever the uſe of carnal weapons, "and the ſervice of an idolatrous maſter." (P. 567.) The words of Marcellus we find to be much enlarged upon, and his juſtification ſuppreſſed, as the reader will readily perceive. "If ſuch," ſays Marcellus, "are the

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" terms of ſervice that we muſt offer ſacrifice " to the gods and to the emperors, I renounce " the profeſſion." Is it not evident that Marcellus only threw up the profeſſion, becauſe he was called upon to do that which his conſcience forbade him to comply with. And what proves it beyond the ſhadow of a doubt, is the circumſtance of the moment in which Marcellus then found himſelf. For they were then *ſacrificing*, as the original (Ruinart) expreſsly ſtates, from which both authors have extracted the narrative. This diſingenuous and uncandid manner of treating a ſubject naturally reminds us of another from the fertile brain of the French poet. "St. Law- " rence," ſays he, "deſerved to be puniſhed " for refuſing to pay to the Prefect of Rome " the contributions levied for the public " charges, and for having inſulted the empe- " ror by bringing a knot of paupers to him " inſtead of money." (Exam. Imp. p. 145.) St. Lawrence, notwithſtanding all that M. de Voltaire has ſaid to depreciate his character, has ever been recognized for one of the moſt illuſtrious martyrs who ſuffered for Jeſus Chriſt. He was the firſt deacon in the church of Rome, and appointed by Pope Sixtus II. to diſtribute the alms, with which the church

was

was intruſted for the maintenance of the poor *. The Emperor Valerian having publiſhed a ſevere edict againſt the Chriſtians, Pope Sixtus was arreſted. As they were conveying him to execution, St. Lawrence followed him bathed in tears. "Where are you "going," ſaid he, "without your ſon and "your ſervant?" Pope Sixtus replied; "A "greater conflict, my dear ſon, is reſerved "for you. In three days you will follow "me." St. Lawrence, conſoled by theſe words prepared himſelf for death. He diſtributed all the money with which he was intruſted for the benefit of the poor, and even ſold the plate belonging to the church for that purpoſe. Upon this Cornelius Seculoris, the Prefect of Rome, who was as greedy of gold, as he was of the innocent blood of the Chriſtians, ſent for St. Lawrence, and aſked him *where were the treaſures of the church?* ſaying that the Emperor had need of them to pay his troops. St. Lawrence requeſted a reſpite of three days to give his anſwer. During this time he collected all the poor, whom the

* There were no tithes at this period. The patrimony of the church was divided into three parts, one of which was appropriated to the maintenance of the poor.

church

church had uſed to maintain. He preſented them to Cornelius, ſaying, "Here, Sir, are "the treaſures of the church." The Prefect's avarice being thus diſappointed, he ordered him to be ſcourged, and afterwards broiled upon a gridiron, which was put in execution on the 10th of Auguſt in the year 258. Thus we ſee that the queſtion was not relative to the contribution of a public tax, but to an *arbitrary* demand of an avaricious magiſtrate. St. Lawrence, who was only the truſtee of theſe charities, could not betray the confidence repoſed in him. To ſhow to the Prefect the number of the poor who were maintained by the alms of the church, and conſequently the laudable application of thoſe alms certainly was no inſult: but moſt aſſuredly it is wrong in any author to endeavour thus to impoſe on the credulity of his readers.

Among the martyrs we likewiſe find ladies of the firſt diſtinction, as Flavia Domitilla, Perpetua of Carthage, Sabina, Cæcilia, &c. Alſo a multitude of aged men, who preſented their ſtiff and frozen limbs to the executioners. We ſee youths, who had ſcarcely taſted the pleaſures of life, when they were eager to ſacrifice it rather than depart from their faith. Once more, let it be aſked; Is

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it poſſible for prejudice, bigotry, or infatuation to inſpire ſuch heroiſm, ſuch undaunted courage, ſuch perſeverance, ſuch intrepidity among every claſs and condition? And if it is not neceſſary abſolutely to attribute ſuch unparalleled exertions of the human frame to the aid and ſupport of divine and ſupernatural power? For nearly three hundred years, (with however from time to time ſome little relaxation) were the enemies to the chriſtian name implacable, the executioners indefatigable, and the Chriſtians invincible.

Laſtly, that which diſtinguiſhes the martyrs of the chriſtian faith from all others whatſoever, was the motive of their ſufferings. It is natural to inquire on what foundation theſe motives were grounded. On facts. Theſe were the motives which induced them to renounce their favorite opinions and the prejudices of their education; to change their courſe of life, and mode of thinking; to embrace a ſyſtem repugnant to the natural inclinations of men; a ſyſtem, which in fact wages war againſt every paſſion. Theſe were the ſprings, and ſource of all their courage and intrepidity, their comfort and ſupport in torments. Wide is the difference between facts and opinion. We may eaſily be pre-

poſſeſſed with a falſe opinion, ſuppoſe it true, become inſenſibly bigotted to it, and at length be ready to ſacrifice every thing rather than depart from it. But it is quite different in regard to facts, of which we have ocular demonſtration. The ſenſes judge of theſe, and as long as we have the right uſe of our reaſon, we do not take the phantoms and illuſions of the brain for realities. Nothing then but voluntary error can deceive us in point of facts. Where is the man to be found amongſt the pretended martyrs of falſe religions, who died in atteſtation of the facts he himſelf ſaw? Thouſands of the primitive Chriſtians on the contrary laid down their lives, rather than depart from a religion which they ſaw with their own eyes ſupported by divine power. "We "cannot," (ſaid St. Paul, Acts iv. 20.) "but "ſpeak of the things which we have ſeen, "and heard."

The Jews and Pagans, who believed upon the teſtimony of the apoſtles, were aſſured of the facts they related, becauſe they ſaw with their own eyes the miracles which they wrought in atteſtation of them. The Chriſtians in the 2d and 3d age were in the ſame ſituation with thoſe of the firſt. They laid down their lives in ſupport of truths verified by facts,

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which they had ſeen alſo. This argument alone, were there no other, is ſufficient to ſhow the eſſential difference between the chriſtian martyrs and the pretended martyrs of other religions. The former were martyrs to a religion founded upon facts: the latter were martyrs to opinion. Theſe were perſuaded by theory; thoſe by reality.

However amiable the chriſtian religion might have appeared in theory, it is not natural that men ſhould have been induced to embrace it. On the contrary, it is certain that they ſhould have had the greateſt repugnance to it, notwithſtanding the ſuperior excellence of thoſe moral virtues which it inculcates. They muſt have been ſhocked at the novelty and incomprehenſibility of many of its doctrines. They muſt have been terrified likewiſe at the auſterity of its precepts, and the rigorous and everlaſting puniſhments which it denounces againſt thoſe illicit pleaſures they had been accuſtomed to enjoy. Nevertheleſs they embraced it. What could effect ſuch a wonderful change in the hearts of men? What could induce them to act diametrically oppoſite to the feelings and inclinations of human nature? Nothing but palpable facts; facts which they ſaw with their own eyes.

The finger of God appearing viſibly in ſupport of it, removed every doubt, and every difficulty whatever.

There are three events which have come to paſs in the world which muſt appear aſtoniſhing to every man of reflexion, and almoſt incredible, were they not aſcertained beyond the poſſibility of a doubt. The firſt is, the univerſality of a religion ſo abſurd, ſo impious as idolatry: the ſecond, the extent of a religion ſo groſs and ſtupid as Mahometiſm: the third, the eſtabliſhment of a religion ſo repugnant to the paſſions and inclinations of mankind as chriſtianity. Without departing from the order of natural cauſes, we can account for the two former. But theſe cauſes will not ſuffice to reconcile the latter to us. The chriſtian religion therefore is the only one, the eſtabliſhment of which can, and ought to be aſcribed to a ſupernatural power. Idolatry took its riſe from ignorance and the depraved paſſions of mankind. Mahometiſm diffuſed itſelf by violence and the force of arms. Chriſtianity owes its exiſtence to invincible patience and courageous perſeverance, ſuperior to every human conſideration whatever.

It is not however impoſſible but that at times, and in particular circumſtances a perſon may be found ſo bigotted to his opinions, ſo puffed up with pride and vanity as to brave death in every ſhape, rather than retract his favorite ſyſtem. Thus we have ſeen conſpirators undergo the moſt excruciating tortures, rather than impeach their accomplices. Yet ſuch examples are rare, and are phenomena which ſeldom appear. But it is not in the courſe of nature, or merely poſſible that thouſands of people of every age, ſex, and condition, ſhould forego the advantages of life, and ſuffer voluntarily and freely the moſt excruciating torments, if they were not compelled by ſupreme motives, and ſupported by ſupernatural aid and aſſiſtance. The chriſtian martyrs (it cannot be too often repeated) therefore were ſuſtained and ſupported by divine power, it being impoſſible otherwiſe in nature for human ſtrength to withſtand ſuch trials. It was in conſequence of this divine aſſiſtance that we may, and ought to aſcribe the noble reply of a woman (Felicitas by name) who was a priſoner, and condemned to die for her faith. This woman, who was eight months gone with child, being ſeized with pains incident to her condition, could not

not refrain expreſſing them. The jailor, perceiving her uneaſineſs, ſaid, "If you cannot "help crying out at preſent, how will you be "able to face the wild beaſts, which you ſo "lately ſeemed to deſpiſe, when you was "called forth to ſacrifice?" "Oh," ſhe replied, "I have only natural ſtrength to ſup-"port me under natural pains and infirmities, "but the divine power of Jeſus Chriſt will "ſupport me under torments, when I ſhall "be called forth to ſuffer for his ſake." (Ruinart, p. 93).

Such will always be the reply of thoſe who act by principle; of thoſe who follow the dictates of conſcience, and of thoſe who are intimately perſuaded of the *one only thing neceſſary*, which their divine Maſter has recommended to them. Conſcientious rectitude is not confined to any age or climate. The divine aſſiſtance, which the primitive chriſtians moſt aſſuredly experienced in their conflicts, will never be wanting to thoſe who engage in the ſame cauſe. Were other proofs wanting, we need only turn our eyes towards France. There we ſhall find that one hundred and thirty-eight archbiſhops and biſhops, ſixty-four thouſand clergymen were driven from their ſees and their pariſhes, and left to ſtarve, for refuſing

refuſing to take an oath againſt their conſciences; that three hundred prieſts were maſſacred in one day in the city of Paris, the reſt either ſacrificed in other places, or baniſhed! Out of this edifying group we will ſelect only three diſtinguiſhed perſonages, for brevity ſake, whoſe meek, yet courageous department muſt excite the admiration, veneration and reſpect of every generous heart. Theſe are the archbiſhop of Arles, (M. Dullau by name) and the two brothers of the noble family de la Rochefaucauld; the one biſhop of Saintes, the other of Beauvais. Theſe venerable prelates, with a multitude of clergymen, were conducted in the morning after the bloody tenth of Auguſt, 1792, to the Carme's church, which was deſtined for their priſon. Here they were confined without the leaſt refreſhment till the next day, and without even a mattreſs to lie upon. During all this time their ears were grated by the blaſphemous and obſcene diſcourſe of thoſe who guarded them. Some time afterwards the extreme rigour of their confinement was a little mitigated, permiſſion having been obtained that their friends and ſervants ſhould ſupply them with ſuch neceſſaries, as were indiſpenſably requiſiteto keep them from periſhing.

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The archbiſhop of Arles however had not even a mattreſs to himſelf. Being the moſt dignified perſon among the ſufferers, he was of conſequence, the main object of the brutal inſolence of the guards, who aſſailed him with unremitting ſcurrility and abuſe. One of them in particular, perceiving the averſion he had to the fumes of tobacco, ſmoked it in his face. The prelate, without uttering a word of complaint, aroſe, and changed his ſeat. The fellow followed him; till, wearied by the patience of the ſuffering victim, he gave up the purſuit. M. Dullau then fell aſleep, being quite exhauſted by his ſufferings. Theſe few moments however of tranquility, were ſoon interrupted by the cry of aſſaſſination. "Well," exclaimed the archbiſhop to the perſon who gave the alarm, "let the will of "God be done," and then calmly fell aſleep again.

The ſame ſerenity (reſulting from a good conſcience) and compoſure of mind marked the conduct of the biſhops of Saintes and Beauvais. At laſt however the fatal moment arrived. The ruffians exclaimed, "Where "is the archbiſhop of Arles?" They queſtioned a clergyman who ſtood near, if he was the perſon. With his eyes caſt down, and his

his hands joined before his breaſt, he made no reply. Turning then to M. Dullau, they ſaid, "you then, villain, are the archbiſhop of "Arles." "Yes, gentlemen," he replied, "I "am the archbiſhop of Arles, and am conſcious "of never having done an injury to any one." On this a blow was diſcharged on the archbiſhop's head. He ſtood however immoveable, and without uttering the leaſt complaint. A ſecond blow wounded him in the face. Still he kept his ground; and without ſaying a ſingle word, raiſed his hand to the wounded part. The third blow however brought him to the ground. No ſooner was he laid proſtrate than being ſtabbed to the heart, an end was put to his ſufferings. The aſſaſſin took the prelates watch from his pocket, and transferred it into his own, as a reward for the murderous deed he had performed.

One of the villains then ſhot at the biſhop of Beauvais, and wounded him in the thigh. Throwing him on the ground, they went in queſt of his brother, whom they no ſooner diſpatched, than they called out to the biſhop of Beauvais to ariſe, and take his fate. He anſwered them, "I do not refuſe to go, and "die like the others, but you ſee it is impoſ-"ſible for me to walk. I humbly beſeech you

" therefore to have the charity to aſſiſt me, to " go to the place where I am called." They raiſed him up by the arms, and trailed his body away to the garden, where they put a final period to his wretched exiſtence. This butchery, which laſted three hours, took place on Sunday the ſecond of September, being the twenty-firſt day of their confinement. (For further particulars the reader is referred to Mr. Barruel's ſtatement of the facts).

To wind up his invective againſt the primitive chriſtians, the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, tells his readers, that " it would be an eaſy taſk from " the hiſtory of Euſebius, from the declama- " tions of Lactantius, and from the moſt an- " cient acts, to collect a long ſeries of horrid " and diſgraceful pictures, and to fill many " pages with racks and ſcourges, with iron- " hooks and red-hot beds." Wherefore he adds, " he has purpoſely refrained from de- " ſcribing the particular ſuffering and deaths " of the chriſtian martyrs." (p. 582). The taſk indeed, as he ſays, would be very eaſy, and what is more (which he ſeems to inſinuate is not the caſe) we may rely confidently on the relations they give us, were they not, at leaſt in general terms, confirmed by the Pagan hiſtorians

hiſtorians themſelves. Their veracity ſtands unimpeached, unleſs it be by modern philoſophers, whoſe views are too intereſted, too palpable to be admitted as legal evidence. But when he ſays "he purpoſely refrained from deſcribing "the particular ſufferings and deaths of the "chriſtian martyrs," he forgot himſelf ſtrangely, for we read in his hiſtory, p. 566 of Maximilian, the recruit; in p. 567 of Marcellus, the centurion; in page 570 of the chriſtian who tore down the edict at Nicomedia, whom, he tells us, "was burnt, or "rather roaſted at a ſlow fire." He informs his readers alſo, that "every mode of torture "was put in practice, and the court as well as "the city, was polluted with many bloody "executions." See likewiſe pages 572, 574, 577, 582, &c. &c.

We will however take the hint, although he has been ſo little attentive to it himſelf, and refrain to diſcant further on a ſubject, which is as painful to relate, as it is wonderful in its principle and edifying in its conſequences.

Having in the courſe of this little Eſſay, occaſionally remarked a few of the miſrepreſentations of M. de Voltaire and his diſciples, it may not be amiſs to lay before the reader, ſome of the many contradictions which ano-

ther modern philoſopher (Rouſſeau) has fallen into. Whence it will appear evident, that they who undertake a bad cauſe, only expoſe themſelves to the ridicule and contempt of every man of ſenſe and information. They write for fools, and among ſuch they hope to make proſelyles. M. de Voltaire has not bluſhed to avow it. "Les ſots," ſays he, "admirent tout dans un auteur eſtimè." In other words, "Fools ſwallow every thing that "flows from the pen of an admired author." M. de Velly, the French hiſtorian, having read a curious anecdote in the works of M. de Voltaire, requeſted to know upon what authority it was grounded. The anſwer which he received from the French poet was as follows. "Quond il s'agit d'amuſer la popu- "lace, il ne faut pas etre trop ſcrupuleux ſur "la verite."

But to return to J. J. Rouſſeau. Abſtracting from the eccentricity of his character, he poſſeſſed undoubtedly many good qualities, which moſt of his ſceptical brethren were ſtrangers to. He was humane and charitable. His purſe, ſuch as it was, was always open to the poor. Unlike M. de Voltaire, he never made a ſcandalous traffic of his pen and talents. He never impoſed upon the public under forged and borrowed names, nor ſold the

the ſame manuſcript to ſeveral bookſellers at the ſame time. Certainly he might have made money of his works, and might alſo have obtained ſome lucrative places, through the influence of his friends and admirers, had not his proud and cynical temper made him forego his own intereſts. Content with a bare mediocrity, he confined himſelf to what was purely neceſſary. Notwithſtanding the paradoxes he maintained, and the errors he gave into, no one will refuſe to acknowledge the ſuperior natural, and the acquired talents he poſſeſſed. Happy would it have been for ſociety, and particularly for the French nation at this moment, who owe in a great meaſure, their miſery and deſolation to his writings, had they taken a better turn. It is ſaid of him, that nothing of an indifferent nature ever eſcaped his pen, poſſeſſing the art of preſenting the moſt fallacious ſubjects under the brighteſt colours. Capable of ſupporting, or oppoſing the ſame argument in the moſt maſterly manner, of which he was not a little proud, he wrote in favor of, and againſt ſuicide; in ſupport of, and againſt duelling. He endeavoured to apologiſe for adultery, yet deſcribed it in the moſt horrible colours. The moſt violent invectives he levels at the philo-

philoſophers, yet he adopts their opinions. His attacks againſt the exiſtence of God, he confutes by incontrovertible arguments againſt the Atheiſts. He ſtarts the moſt captious objections againſt the chriſtian religion, which he nevertheleſs extols in the higheſt ſtrain of panegyric. There would be no end, if a minute detail was given of the contrarieties which are to be met with in his works. They prove indeed how far a man may be a dupe to himſelf when he follows only the light of his own weak reaſon, and how uncertain philoſophy is in its ideas, when once it deviates from the bounds preſcribed to it by the great Author of nature. However as it is reaſon alone, which J. J. Rouſſeau has taken for his guide, let us examine what uſe he has made of it.

" The God," ſays he, " whom I adore, is " not a God of darkneſs. He hath not en- " dowed me with an underſtanding to forbid " me the uſe of it. To tell me I muſt ſubmit " my reaſon, is to inſult the author of it." (Emile, t. 3. p. 139.) Thus we ſee that reaſon is all-powerful. What follows proves it to be the reverſe. " The more I ſtrive to " contemplate the infinite eſſence of God, " the leſs I conceive it: but it is, that is

" enough

" enough for me: the leſs I conceive it, the " more I adore it. I humble myſelf, and ſay: " Being of beings, I am, becauſe thou art: " to meditate on thee without ceaſing, is to go " up to the fountain-head of my exiſtence. " *The moſt worthy uſe I can make of my reaſon,* " *is to annihilate it before thee.*" (Letter p. 54.)

Once more let us hear him in favor of reaſon. " The greateſt ideas we have of the " Divinity come by reaſon alone. Behold the " ſpectacle of nature; hearken to the interior " voice. Hath not God ſaid every thing to " our eyes, to our conſcience, to our judge- " ment?" (Emile, t. 3. p. 122.)

Againſt reaſon. " The incomprehenſible " Being which contains all, who gives motion " to the world, and forms the whole ſyſtem of " beings, is neither viſible to our eyes, nor " palpable to our hands; he eſcapes all our " ſenſes. The work is ſeen, but the artiſt is " hid. It is no ſmall matter to know at laſt " that he exiſts; and after we have got ſo far, " when we put the queſtion to ourſelves: " What is he? Where is he? Our mind is " confounded: it wanders, and we know not " what to think." (Emile, t. 2. p. 313,) " He " is equally concealed from *my ſenſes*, and

" *from*

"*from my underſtanding:* the more I think of "him, the more I am confounded." (ib. t. 3, p. 58.)

So much for J. J. Rouſſeau's reaſons. Let us now attend to a few more contradictions, which he has unwarily fallen into, for it has often been obſerved that great wits have now and then ſhort memories.

In the fine panegyric which he has made of our bleſſed Saviour (as related in the courſe of this little eſſay) he ſays "Is the tone he "makes uſe of that of an ambitious ſectary?" Yet in letter (p. 93,) he affirms, after drawing a parallel between Moſes, Jeſus Chriſt and Mahomet, that "we ſhould not treat them as "impoſtors. Who knows how far the conti-"nual meditations on the Deity, how far the "enthuſiaſm of virtue in their ſublime ſouls "might diſturb the didactic and crawling or-"der of vulgar ideas. In too elevated a ſitu-"ation the head turns, and things are no "longer ſeen as they are in themſelves." Thus, in the firſt place, we read that Jeſus Chriſt had not the tone of *an enthuſiaſt*, or of an *ambitious ſectary*, and afterwards that it is poſſible his brain was turned by an enthuſiaſm of virtue. In the ſame panegyric he declares Jeſus Chriſt to have been endowed with *the*

moſt

moſt ſublime wiſdom; here he is repreſented as a man, *who does not ſee things as they are in "themſelves!*

In ſpeaking of the goſpel (as has been noticed) J. J. Rouſſeau exclaims. "Is it "poſſible that a work ſo ſimple and ſo ſublime "ſhould be the work of man?" "And yet "with all this," he adds, "the goſpel is full of "things incredible, repugnant to reaſon, and "which no man of ſenſe can conceive, or ad-"mit." Letter, p. 128.)

"We have," ſays he, "three principal re-"ligions in Europe. That which admits on-"ly one revelation is the moſt ancient and "ſeems the moſt ſafe; that which admits three "is the moſt modern, and ſeems the moſt co-"herent; that which admits two, and rejects "the third, may perhaps be the beſt, but it "certainly has every prejudice againſt it; its "incoherency ſtares you in the face." (Emile, t. 3. p. 140.) This period he contradicts without the leaſt ceremony. "There is," ſays he, "no revelation, againſt which the "ſame objections have not the ſame, or "greater force, than they have againſt chriſ-"tianity." (t. 3, p. 188.) He tells his readers alſo (Soc. Comp. B. iv, chap. 8.) that "Chriſ-

" tianity preaches nothing but ſlavery and de-
" pendence. The ſpirit of it is too favorable
" to tyranny, for the latter not to make its
" advantage of it on every occaſion. True
" chriſtians are formed for ſlaves." How is this period to be reconciled with what he has ſaid elſewhere? viz. that " Chriſtianity hath
" ſoftened ſlavery, and given to the manners
" of nations a mildneſs and humanity which
" letters could never have communicated to
" them. It hath rendered the different forms
" of government more moderate, and leſs ſan-
" guinary, and by that means leſs tottering.—
" It hath provided for the ſecurity of maſters,
" and the happineſs of ſubjects." (Emile, t. iii. p. 185.) " I am" ſays the ſame J. J. Rouſſeau, " a chriſtian, not as a diſciple of
" prieſts, but as a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt."
A very docile diſciple indeed, who can tell his maſter that " he teaches things repugnant
" to reaſon; that his head is turned, and he
" does not ſee things as they are in them-
" ſelves!" " But whether," he adds, " I ought
" to have kept my ſentiments on theſe matters
" to myſelf, (as they never ceaſe telling me)
" or whether (when I had the courage to
" publiſh them under my own name) I at-
" tacked

"tacked the laws, and disturbed the public "peace of society, is what I shall examine by "and by." (Letter, p. 60.) Whatever his intentions might have been in that respect, he never kept his word, and he might have his own reasons for so doing. But he has nevertheless taken care to condemn his own conduct as usual. "I do not think," says he, "that any one can lawfully introduce a new "religion into a country without the permis- "sion of the sovereign; for if it be not di- "rectly disobeying God, it is disobeying the "laws, and whoever disobeys the laws, dis- "obeys God." Thus he has pointedly condemned his own conduct; for what right had he, a foreigner as he was, to print and diffuse his pernicious doctrines in France?

These few contradictions and inconsistencies, among a variety of others which are to be found scattered throughout all his works, are sufficient to put every man upon his guard who ventures to peruse them. Let the reader never lose sight of what he says himself of modern philosophers, in which he certainly may be included, viz. that "they give us for "true principles of things only unintelligible "systems, which they have raised in their own "imaginations." (Emile, t. iii, p. 149.)

Will

Will rational men then follow ſuch guides? Will they reſt their beſt hopes upon ſuch precarious and uncertain grounds? Certainly not. They will, on the contrary, adhere to that goſpel, which with reſpect to morality (as the ſaid J. J. Rouſſeau confeſſes) is *always certain, always true, always ſingular, and always conſiſtent with itſelf.*

FINIS.